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The Yorkshire Woollen and
Worsted Industries

By HERBERT HEATON, M.A., M.Com.

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At the Clarendon Press

1920



THE
YORKSHIRE

Woollen and Worsted
Industries

From the Earliest Times up to
the Industrial Revolution



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P R E F A C E

THE present volume had its origin in a thesis written in 1911 for the Honours School of History in the University of Leeds. In that work my attention was confined to the Yorkshire textile industry in the eighteenth century, but the award of the Rutson Research Scholarship (1911) and of a Fellowship (1912) by the University of Leeds made it possible to devote much time to the earlier history of the industry. The substance of the first three chapters was submitted for the M.A. degree (Leeds), and that of the greater part of the book was presented as a thesis for the degree of M.Com. (Birmingham) in 1914. Since then the thesis has been largely rewritten and considerably expanded.

In the following pages I have attempted to sketch the history of the Yorkshire woollen and worsted industries from the earliest times of which there is documentary evidence down to the eve of the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I have traced the expansion of the local manufacture, and described its many vicissitudes, its organization at various stages, its markets, its relation to the State. But in all things the coming of the Industrial Revolution has been my stopping-place. The building of the modern mills, the final capture of the worsted trade from East Anglia, the victory over the West of England clothiers, and other results of the coming of *la grande industrie* are left untouched. My reason for stopping at this point was that to carry the story on to the present day would make the volume too long. Further, on commencing my researches I found a number of scholars at work on the period 1760-1900. One was specializing on the Bradford trade after 1760; another was studying the textile trades, 1750-1850; the Hammonds were promising a volume on the town labourer, and Mantoux had already published *La Révolution Industrielle* (1906). Dr. Clapham had written

on the migration of the worsted industry from East Anglia (*Economic Journal*, 1910), and his *Woollen and Worsted Industries* (1907) provided a standard work on the present position of those industries. The old books, such as James's *History of the Worsted Manufacture* (1857), had given intimate pictures of some aspects of the 'great change', and special topics such as the Factory Acts and trade unionism had been thoroughly discussed by recent writers. Thus the modern period had plenty of followers already at work, and it would have been unwise to go over ground so well trodden already. Yet there was a distinct gap in the history of the woollen manufacture waiting to be filled. Writers on the Industrial Revolution have generally begun with a sketch of industrial society about 1607, but have made little effort to trace the rise of that society, contenting themselves with a few quotations from Young and Defoe. Further, in their references to the woollen industry of the eighteenth century writers have conveyed the impression that Yorkshire was, and had been for centuries, insignificant as a producer of cloth. This idea, due possibly to Macaulay's gloomy picture of the North of England in his famous third chapter, is incorrect. My aim, therefore, has been to tell a story which ends with a detailed picture of the eighteenth-century industry, to link up the fourteenth century with the eighteenth, to throw light on to the events of the Tudor and Stuart periods, and finally to give the Yorkshire industry its proper place in relation to that of East Anglia and the West of England.

The work is based chiefly upon information gleaned from printed materials of the last two centuries, and from manuscripts covering the whole period from the thirteenth century to the eighteenth. Some of these documents are housed in the British Museum and Public Record Office, but a large amount of matter has been obtained from papers found in various parts of the West Riding, chiefly in the hands of local authorities and the cellars of solicitors' offices. The student of Yorkshire history is fortunate in that many manuscripts of

local importance have been printed by the Yorkshire Archaeological, Surtees, Thoresby, and other antiquarian societies. May I suggest that these organizations should unite in an effort to obtain a Record Office for Yorkshire or the North of England, in which the documents scattered throughout the county might be collected and carefully preserved. Local bodies are, with few exceptions, notoriously indifferent about the welfare of old manuscripts in their charge, and the pressure of other duties makes it very inconvenient for their officials to provide all the desirable facilities to searchers. The magnificent accumulation of York municipal records has been placed in a state of good repair, but is virtually inaccessible to the student; the West Riding Sessions Books and the Leeds Corporation MSS. might with advantage be handed over to the care of a Yorkshire Record Office; and investigation would show that many interesting documents lie unvalued in private hands, in perpetual danger of destruction, when they should be gathered together and made available for purposes of research.

The technologist who looks to these pages for new information concerning the progress of textile skill and methods will be disappointed. Excepting in Chapters VIII and X, I have avoided making any detailed description of textile processes, for such a task can be accomplished successfully only by one versed thoroughly in the practices surrounding the making of cloth. I have dealt rather with the weaver than with weaving: with textile workers rather than with technology. Still, it was impossible to neglect entirely the technical side of the story, and the general reader who wishes to understand the difference between woollens and worsteds, or to know the character of the various textile processes, is recommended to glance first at the treatment of these topics on pp. 259-63 and 332-44.

For assistance generously rendered, my thanks are due to many—to the University of Leeds for the financial support which made it possible to spend a year examining documents in London and elsewhere; to Professor A. J. Grant and

Professor D. H. Macgregor for their encouragement and advice during the early stages of preparation ; to Dr. L. Knowles, who guided me through the maze of the British Museum and Record Office archives ; to Sir Robert Fox (Town Clerk of Leeds), Mr. Peake (Clerk of the Peace, Leeds), Mr. Vibart Dixon (Clerk of the Peace, West Riding), Mr. H. Greenwood-Teale (Leeds), Messrs. Mumford and Johnson (Bradford), and the Town Clerk of York, for permission to examine documents in their keeping ; and to Mr. H. Ling Roth, of the Bankfield Museum, Halifax, for reading parts of the manuscript, and for many valuable suggestions. To Dr. Maud Sellers, Mr. John Lister, and Professor Sir William Ashley it is difficult to express adequate thanks. Dr. Sellers placed at my disposal the whole of her voluminous transcripts from the York Corporation MSS., and was always ready to assist in every possible way. Mr. Lister in similar fashion opened to me his collection of copies of local documents, the fruits of over twenty years' work. Sir William Ashley read through my manuscript, gave help and advice at many points, and found me a publisher. To my colleagues, Professor Naylor, Mr. R. Bronner, and Mr. W. Ham, of the University of Adelaide, I am indebted for much assistance in reading the proofs. Finally, I am indebted to my wife for unwearied assistance in preparing the work for the press ; and to my parents, without whose generous aid the work could never have been done.

H. H.

UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE,

March, 1920.

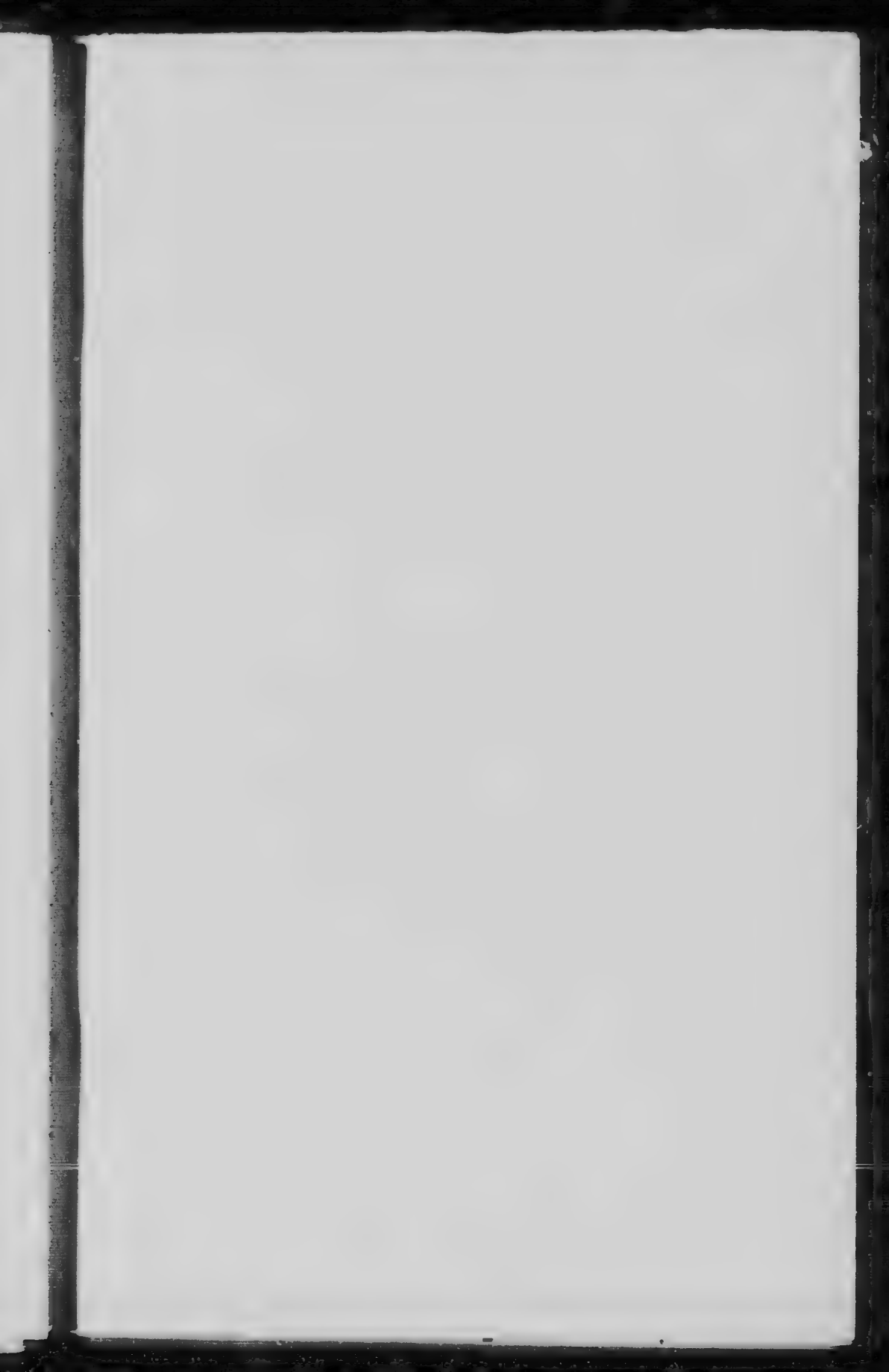
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English Miles

CHAPTER I

THE INFANCY OF THE WOOLLEN INDUSTRY IN YORKSHIRE

THE manufacture of woollen cloth has for centuries been an important occupation of Yorkshire men and women. From the twelfth century onwards there is abundant proof of the existence of the industry, and since that time generation after generation has worked at the spinning-wheel, loom, and dye-vat. The industry has been the architect of the social structure in each epoch, and has been the motive power of the county's progress. Finally, it has left its mark in the list of family names; Lister, Walker, Webster, and other names common in the county, have survived from the days when a man took his surname from his trade.¹

Until about 1300, however, the outstanding feature of economic life in the county (apart from agriculture) was the trade in wool. The production of wool, especially for the foreign market, provides a topic which lies outside the scope of this volume, and we can only notice it in passing. But it is necessary to remember that a great part of the wool produced on the manors and abbey lands² was exported to feed the looms of Germany, Italy, and the Low Countries. Native³ and foreign merchants flocked to the wool fairs, or went direct to the producer, in their search for supplies. Long-period contracts were made frequently between these buyers and the Yorkshire abbots, and on one

¹ Lister was the trade name for dyer, Walker for fuller, and Webster for weaver.

² The abbeys were large wool-producers. In 1270, the Abbot of Meaux sold 120 sacks to merchants of Lucca (*Chronicles of Meaux Abbey*, Rolls Series, II, 156). The list of about 200 monasteries supplying wool to Flanders, circa 1284, contains the names of thirty-nine Yorkshire abbeys (Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, 1910 edition, vol. I, app. D, pp. 628 et seq.).

³ Patent Rolls, 1 Ed. I, mm. 7, 8, and 14, give lists of licences to export wool. The licences were chiefly to alien merchants, but Hull, Pontefract, York, Lincoln, Newcastle, &c., are also represented. In 1230 merchants of Beverley were sending ships laden with wool, &c., to Flanders, and another ship was laden with the goods 'mercatorum de Eboraco' (Close Rolls, 14 Hen. III, m. 3); and in 1334, merchants of York, Beverley, Pontefract, and 'the parts of Craven' were residing in Flanders (Close Rolls, 8 Ed. III, m. 6 d).

occasion an Italian company agreed to purchase the whole of the Kirkstall clip for ten years.¹ The wool was exported from York and Hull, and between the merchants of these towns a keen rivalry existed for the monopoly of the trade.²

Meanwhile a certain amount of the raw material was being made into cloth at home, and this amount increased as time went by. We do not know what proportion was retained for the Yorkshire industry, but it is improbable that the local demand was a serious rival of the foreign until the fourteenth century. To the rise of that local demand, and the early growth of the Yorkshire textile industry, we must now turn our attention.

(a) *The Rise of Cloth-making*

Of the origins of the textile industry in Yorkshire, or indeed in England, very little is known. The discovery of rude textile implements in the lake-village of Glastonbury and elsewhere proves that the weaving of cloth is of prehistoric antiquity.³ In Anglo-Saxon times cloth was widely used for garments by all classes, and the rough coarse fabrics worn by the poor were doubtless woven in the huts of the period, just as hearth-rugs are 'pricked' and stockings knitted in the homes of the working-classes of Yorkshire to-day. At the same time a higher grade of cloth was being produced in some districts, and dyeing was practised, the dye being obtained from cockles, or from madder imported from France. By the end of the eighth century Mercia was exporting woollen cloaks, presumably made from English cloth, to the realms of Charlemagne, and owing to some apparently fraudulent reduction in the length of the garments Charles found it necessary in 796 to ask King Offa that the cloaks might be 'made of the same pattern as used to come to us in olden time'.⁴

¹ *Coucher Book of Kirkstall Abbey* (Thoresby Soc. Publications, vol. viii), pp. xxiii-xxiv, and 226-7, document cccxxiv, under date 1202.

² For details of this rivalry, see Poulson, *Beverlac* (1829), p. 89 n.; also Wheeler, 'Early Textile Industry in Yorkshire', in *Old Yorkshire* (1885), p. 264; also Close Rolls, 6 Ed. III, m. 1, and Patent Rolls, 14 Ed. III, m. 14. The two towns were occasionally made Staples for the control of the wool export.

³ For much interesting information concerning the early industry see H. Salzmänn, *English Industries of the Middle Ages* (1913), chap. viii.

⁴ Letter from Charles the Great to Offa, A.D. 796 (*English History Source Books*, no. 1, ed. Wallis, pp. 59-61). See also A. F. Dodds, *Early English Social History* (Bell 1912), pp. 128 and 130.

Of evidence relating to the industry in Yorkshire in particular there is none. We know that York¹ was an important port and market long before A.D. 1000, trading in wool, and possibly in cloth to a small extent. Of the great mass of the Yorkshire rural population it is safe to surmise that they were dressed in cloth produced by the distaff and primitive hand-loom in the cottages scattered throughout the county.

With the twelfth and thirteenth centuries comes more documentary evidence relating to York, from which we can gather that the textile industry was firmly rooted in town and country alike long before 1300. The first traces are to be found in the two great ecclesiastical centres, York and Beverley, where the industry appeared early under gild organization. The weavers of York are first mentioned in the Pipe Roll of 1164,² and in the following year the payment is definitely stated to be 'pro gilda sua'.³ The York gild was by no means the first in the field. Lincoln⁴ had its weavers' gild in 1131, and the Pipe Rolls of the early years of Henry II record the subscriptions of weavers' organizations at London, Winchester, Lincoln, Nottingham, Oxford, and Huntingdon.⁵ But when York appeared, the amount of its contribution leads one to believe that its weavers' gild must have been of some magnitude. Thus in 1164 the payments to the Exchequer were as follows:

	£
Weavers of London	12
" " York	10
" " Lincoln, Winchester, and Oxford	6
Fullers of Winchester	6
Weavers of Huntingdon and Nottingham	2 ⁶

York jumped at once into the second place on the list, acknowledging only London as superior in the amount of its contribution. We may therefore assume that by the middle of the twelfth century there was a comparatively large body of men in York

¹ Alcuin remarked on the commercial importance of York in his day. See Drake, *Eboracum* (1737 folio edition), pp. 227-8.

² Pipe Roll Soc. publications, Pipe Roll, 11 Hen. II, p. 46.

³ Ibid., 12 Hen. II, p. 36.

⁴ Pipe Roll, 31 Hen. I (Record Com.), p. 109.

⁵ See earlier volumes of Pipe Roll Soc. publications.

⁶ Pipe Roll, 11 Hen. II. See under names of towns. Oxford does not appear in the Roll for 1164, but see Pipe Roll, 12 Hen. II, p. 117.

engaged in the trade of weaving, and able to pay a substantial sum (at least £150 in modern money) for the monopolistic privileges¹ conferred upon the gild by the Royal Charter.

Beverley did not lag far behind York. In the reign of Henry II there was buying and selling of cloth there,² and Spanish merchants were exporting pieces 'de scarlato et . . . de Staunford, de Beverlaco, de Ebor' to the Continent.³ In 1209 the 'Law of the Weavers and Fullers of Beverley' was quoted alongside laws of Winchester, Marlborough, and Oxford,⁴ and during the thirteenth century the wares of Beverley achieved widespread fame, the 'Beverley Bleu'⁵ and the 'Pann de Scarleta' being especially famous, both at home and abroad. In fact, the prices paid for the Beverley fabrics indicate that these cloths were of the highest quality. Witness the following data:

A. D. 1319: 1 robe and 2 whole pieces of Pers⁶ cloth of Beverley were valued at £18; 4 whole cloths of Beverley were valued at £28. As a whole cloth was about 24 yards in length, this price was equivalent to about 6s. per yard, or quite £4 10s. in modern money. Compared with the current prices of other cloths the above statements indicate a high standard of workmanship,⁷ and the Beverley pieces seem to have stood alongside those of Lincoln and Stamford, which were the best produced in England at that time.

The activity of York and Beverley was reflected in a less degree in the smaller towns of the county. In 1274 Whitby, Hedon, and Selby were mentioned as places in which cloth was made, and the inhabitants were accused of manufacturing it of dimensions contrary to the assize laid down in Magna Carta.⁸ Whitby has been the home of many pursuits, and in the reign of Edward I it was a cloth-making stronghold, with John the Fuller, Roger the Dyer, Nicholas the Weaver,⁹ and others of the same occupations amongst its inhabitants.

Meanwhile, what of the still smaller communities scattered

¹ See section on the textile gilds for the nature of these privileges.

² Malox, *The History and Antiquities of the Exchequer* (1711), p. 408.

³ Paulson, *Beverlac* (1829), p. 58.

⁴ Selden Soc. publications, vol. xiv (*Beverley Town Documents*), p. 135, quoting Add. MSS. 14252.

⁵ Close Rolls, 20 Hen. III, m. 6.

⁶ Probably a 'blue' cloth.

⁷ Close Rolls, 13 Ed. II, m. 14.

⁸ Hundred Rolls (Records Comm.), Ed. I, Com. Ebor., i. 131-2.

⁹ Lay Subsidy, 30 Ed. I (York Arch. Soc. Record Series, vol. xxi, p. 1081).

throughout the rural area of the county? The evidence of a widespread industry here is no less conclusive, and in every Riding we find men whose attention had become concentrated on some branch of cloth-making.

At Leeds¹ in 1201 a certain Simon the Dyer was fined 100s. for selling wine contrary to the legal assize;² the nature of the entry and the amount of the payment indicate that Simon engaged in other trades besides that of dyeing, and was a wealthy man. Robertus Tynctor (dyer) de Ledes³ was a witness to a Kirkstall Abbey charter not later than 1237, and an inquisition of 1258 records the names of William Webster (textor), Richard and Andrew Taillur (tailors?), and John Lister (tinctor), in the list of Leeds cottars.⁴ A little later, in 1275, Alexander Fuller of Leeds was fined for making cloth which was not of the proper breadth,⁵ and thus in Leeds of the thirteenth century we meet the weaver, the fuller, and the dyer.

The Calverley charters, which cover the thirteenth century, show that Calverley was a centre for the fulling of cloth. Standing on the river Aire, it was especially suited for this kind of work, and no less than five fullers are mentioned about 1257.⁶ Turning to the south and west, the Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield provide abundant evidence of the existence of cloth-makers in the surrounding villages. These Rolls refer to the area between Wakefield and Halifax, and throughout this expanse the distribution of textile workers is almost uniform. In 1284 Thomas the Weaver of Hipperholme complained that his two cows had disappeared from the common,⁷ and in the same year weavers of Sowerby⁸ and Sandal⁹ came before the Court. Ossett¹⁰ was the home of Robert the Lister (i.e. dyer), 1274, and other dyers carried on their business at Alverthorpe¹¹

¹ Wm. Paganel's charter to Drax (c. 1110) indicates the presence of mills in Leeds; possibly one was a fulling-mill (J. S. Fletcher, *Picturesque History of Yorkshire* (n.d.), i. 354).

² Jackson, *Guide to Leeds* (1886), p. 21. This 'Guide' is a scholarly piece of work, but no authority is quoted for the above fact.

³ *Coucher Book of Kirkstall Abbey*, charter cvii. Thoresby Soc. publications, vol. viii, p. 81.

⁴ Inquisition, 1258 (Yorks. Arch. Soc., Record Series, xii. 56-7).

⁵ Jackson, *Guide to Leeds*, p. 21.

⁶ *Calverley Charters*, Thoresby Soc. publications, vol. vi, pp. 8-55. No weavers are mentioned till 1357, pp. 170-1.

⁷ *Wakefield Court Rolls* (Yorks. Arch. Soc., Record Series, 2 vols.), i. 182.

⁸ *Ibid.*, ii. 18.

⁹ *Ibid.*, ii. 203.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, i. 81.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, i. 269.

and Halifax.¹ Of fullers there were many. These men washed the grease and other foreign matter out of the rough pieces which had been woven in the cottages for home use; but the existence of so many fullers leads one to believe that a great part of the cloths which came to them had been made for the home or foreign market. Certainly, all down the Calder Valley we find the fulling-mill—at Sowerby, Halifax, Rastrick, Mirfield, Dewsbury, Ossett, and Alverthorpe.² These mills were the property of the lord of the manor, and the tenants were compelled to use the manorial mill and no other.³ But though the lord retained the monopoly for his mill, he did not manage the work himself; instead, he leased the mill to one or two of his tenants for an annual rent. Thus, in 1277, William the Fuller of Wakefield and Ralph de Wortley paid forty shillings as one year's rental for the mill at Wakefield.⁴ It was no small mill which could command a rental of £2, but William and his partner would have plenty of business, washing the pieces before they were cut up into garments by the cottagers or placed for display and sale on the cloth-booths which stood in the market-place. For Wakefield had its dealers also; there was Philip the Mercer⁵ (1274), William the Chapman,⁶ Philip the Tailor, and one or two merchants, all in or near Wakefield.⁷

Sufficient has been said to show that the industry was already present in the parts which were eventually to become its stronghold. But these districts had not the monopoly of the rural manufacture, for entries such as have been detailed above can be found concerning all parts of Yorkshire. Away in the dales we meet Thomas Webster and Isabel Webster, both weavers, at Skipton.⁸ In the Vale of York there were fullers at Pocklington,⁹ tailors and fullers at Thorp Arch,¹⁰ walkers (fullers) and 'litesters' (dyers) at Aberford and Alwoodley.¹¹

¹ *Wakefield Court Rolls* (Yorks. Arch. Soc., Record Series, 2 vols.), i. 272.

² *Ibid.*, both vols., *passim*.

³ See Wheeler, *op. cit.*, p. 262, for charter from Archbishop of York to inhabitants of Sherburn (A.D. 1282), illustrating monopoly over fulling-mill.

⁴ *Wakefield Court Rolls*, i. 176.

⁵ *Ibid.*, i. 81. In 1308, cloth booths mentioned, ii. 179.

⁶ *Ibid.*, i. 163.

⁷ *Ibid.*, i. 131.

⁸ Inquisition, 31 Ed. I (Yorks. Arch. Soc., Record Series, xxxvii. 101).

⁹ Yorks. Arch. Soc., Record Series, xii. 76 (A.D. 1200).

¹⁰ Inquisition, 1301 (Yorks. Arch. Soc., Record Series, xxxi. 168).

¹¹ This is a little later, 1327. Thoresby Soc. publications, ii. 88 et seq.

Aysgarth,¹ Stokesley, and Pickering² carried on the various branches of the industry, and there was a dye-house at Richmond worth £4 per annum.³ Northallerton, Yarm, and Ripon were flourishing communities, containing a full and strong contingent of cloth-makers, as well as tailors, glovers, mercers, &c.⁴ In the southern areas of the county, Pontefract, Rotherham, and Sheffield were similarly provided with all the necessary men for making and selling woollen goods.⁵

The above is a mere catalogue of names and places, but it will serve to prove that by 1300 there was in town and country alike a big element of textile labour, which was supplying domestic needs and also a wider market. The cloths of Beverley and York were of no mean quality, and took their places alongside the high-class pieces produced at Lincoln, Stamford, and elsewhere, goods for which there was a big demand abroad. On the other hand, the rural fabrics were of inferior quality and coarse texture,⁶ and did not take a prominent place even in the home market. Native manufacture could now meet some of the demands of the wealthy, and all the needs of the poor, and a few types of cloth were exported to the Continent. Still, one must not over-emphasize these facts, or convey the impression that by 1300 England had cut herself free from dependence upon foreign supplies. King and nobility, though they frequently purchased English wares, often had recourse to the produce of Flanders, and in the fostering ordinances⁷ of the early fourteenth century, when the use of foreign cloths was forbidden, a saving clause was always inserted in favour of the finery of royalty and nobility.⁸ Hence there was a steady importation of Continental cloths, and many merchants from Yorkshire loaded ships at Sluys and other foreign ports 'with cloth and other goods . . . for the purpose of bringing the same to Kyngeston-uppon-Hulle to trade therewith', taking back lead or wool in

¹ Lay Subsidy, 30 Ed. I (Yorks. Arch. Soc., Record Series, xxi. 100, 103, &c.).

² *Ibid.*, *passim*.

³ Yorks. Arch. Soc., Record Series, xii. 230.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xxi. 16, 27, 69.

⁵ *Ibid.*, xv. 76, 81, 145, &c.

⁶ Kendal cloth in the fifteenth century was worth only 4½d. per yard (*Lord Howard's Household Book*, ii. 210).

⁷ e.g. Ordinance of 1327, Patent Rolls, 1 Ed. III, pt. ii, m. 24.

⁸ In 1242, for instance, Henry III ordered 'Rogerus le Taylur retineat duas navatas panni Flandrensis . . . ad robas regis contra instantem hyemem'. Close Rolls, 26 Hen. III, pt. iii, m. 4.

return.¹ The next three centuries were to witness a great change, as the export trade in wool declined, and British and foreign merchants carried more and more English pieces to every part of the Continent, making the produce of Yorkshire looms a commodity of international fame—or notoriety.²

b The Flemish Immigration

The definite emergence of the textile trade during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has given rise to much speculation, and the question has been asked, Was this progress due to the natural development of the domestic industry, or to the influx of Flemish cloth-makers? The question is of some importance, but unfortunately there is not sufficient evidence to enable one to give a definite answer. Hence on the one hand it can be urged that manufacture for the market evolved naturally from manufacture for home use; whilst on the other hand many have maintained that the greater part, if not the whole, of the credit must be placed at the door of the Flemish immigrants. The latter theory has for long held sway, and the old historians made the alien weaver the hero of a story full of charm and heroics. Fuller³ gave to him one of his most poetic paragraphs, and although later writers have almost destroyed the halo, the debt to the mediaeval immigrant is still admitted by many to be very great. Approaching the subject as it concerns the Yorkshire industry in particular, some popular writers have asserted that cloth-making was unknown until about 1331. Mr. A. C. Price, in his excellent little book on *Leeds and its Neighbourhood*, refers to the Flemish weavers who settled at York during the reign of Edward III, 'to whom probably the great clothing trade of the West Riding owes its origin';⁴ and when the statue of the Black Prince was erected in Leeds some few years ago, many speakers and writers justified the choice of subject on the grounds that the Black Prince's father was responsible for the introduction of the woollen industry into Leeds and district. Serious writers have, of course, long since repudiated any such extreme view, but Dr. Maud Sellers, in her

¹ Close Rolls, 13 Ed. II, m. 14.

² For the complaints concerning bad workmanship see Chapter IV.

³ Fuller, *Church History of Britain* (1845 edition), iii, § 9.

⁴ Price, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

account of the woollen industry in the *Victoria County History*, attributes great importance to migrations of Flemings, especially during the eleventh, twelfth, and fourteenth centuries.¹ The present writer must confess his inability to accept her conclusions, and feels that the part played by the Flemings in establishing and developing the Yorkshire industry has been over-rated by even such an eminent authority as Miss Sellers.

As to the influence of Flemings in Yorkshire during the Norman régime, one cannot safely pass any judgement, as there is so little evidence on either side. Miss Sellers bases her cases largely on the Domesday Survey, with its reiterated 'waste', and urges that people must have come from somewhere to repopulate these stricken valleys. No part of England was sufficiently populous to be able to spare detachments for the West Riding. The Low Countries were overcrowded; access to Yorkshire from Belgium was easy; therefore Flemings came, settled in the vacant places, and built up the textile industry in these parts.

But was the West Riding really so entirely depopulated, desolate, and in need of a thorough resettlement? In the pages of Domesday Book many Yorkshire villages are described by the melancholy word 'Waste'. William I, in his march of vengeance in 1069, had spread the destroying army over a large section of the county, and his ravages embraced the eastern parts of the West and North Ridings, almost the whole of the East Riding, the city of York, and the upper valleys of the Aire and Calder.² Scarcely had William departed southwards when Malcolm Canmore raided the northern counties, penetrating as far as the North Riding. He also plundered right and left, and those who fell into his hands were either killed or taken away as slaves to Scotland. Hence those who made the great survey in 1086 were impelled to write 'waste' over almost the whole area north and west of Leeds and Wakefield.³ But this term did not necessarily imply an absence of all human life, for some manors which were so described contained villeins or cottars in

¹ For Miss Sellers' discussion of this topic, see *Victoria County History*, Yorkshire, ii. 436-40.

² Matthew Paris, *Chronica Maiora* (Rolls Series), ii. 3-4.

³ See map and article by Dr. Beddoe, 'The Ethnology of the West Riding' (*Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, vol. xix, pp. 57 et seq.)

1086. Further, as William's army approached, many Yorkshiremen doubtless fled into hiding in the forests or on the moors, where it would be easy to find solitude and safety. With them they might take cattle and sheep, and either settle there permanently as moorland shepherds, or return to their old homes when the destroyer had departed. One need only know the West Riding countryside to realize the impossibility of a total destruction of population by William's troops.

Again, some of the important clothing centres of a later date were flourishing communities at the time of Domesday. York¹ had a population of over 5,000, and Beverley had been left untouched by William. Ripon and Pontefract were important settlements; Leeds, spared by the Conqueror, had a population of over 200 persons,² and was worth more than before 1066, and Wakefield, Batley, Dewsbury, and some other places were little, if any, smaller than before the Conquest. Thus the West Riding was far from being completely depopulated; in fact, it contained almost as many people as the other two Ridings put together.³ If the Flemings had required a new home, easy of access, near a wool supply, and sparsely populated, they could have found such an area farther east than the West Riding.

It is possible that population was brought to the uninhabited manors of Yorkshire by the new Norman landlords, and this population might be brought from other parts of England or from abroad. The De Laci family, which had received almost the whole expanse from the borders of Lincolnshire to Lancashire, owned other parts of England as well,⁴ and might thus move tenants from the south, or from the populous Pontefract area westward. At the same time Flemish landlords obtained many parts of the North Country, to which they may have brought Flemish artisans. For instance, William I gave large estates in Holderness to the valiant and restless Fleming, Drogo de la Bouerac,⁵

¹ H. B. de Gibbins, *Industrial History of England*, 16th edition, 1910, map, p. 38.

² Price, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

³ Dr. Beddoe calculates the Domesday population as follows: West Riding, 1,143; East, 2,300; North, 1,311: *Yorks. Arch. Journal*, pp. 56 et seq.

⁴ Price, *op. cit.*, pp. 33 and 118.

⁵ *Chronicles of the Abbey of Meaux* (Rolls Series), i. 89-90. Drogo built the castle at Skypse, but soon left the region, because of its infertility.

and Gilbert of Ghent received lands on the other side of the Humber.¹ A certain Reiner the Fleming² founded Kirklees Nunnery, and even so far west as Hellifield we find in 1202 a family which hailed from the Low Countries.³ Further, during the strife of the twelfth century the Flemish mercenary was very much in evidence. William of Ypres, a leader of mercenary troops, was one of Stephen's right-hand men,⁴ and Walter of Ghent led a body of his fellow-countrymen at the Battle of the Standard.⁵ But there is nothing to show that these men were in any way connected with the textile trade. They were fighters rather than artisans. Still, the land from which they came was one in which the cloth industry had flourished for more than a century, and so some of the rank and file might be acquainted with the art, and a few might settle down to industrial pursuits. Further, the wealthy Fleming would bring his 'entourage', which would almost certainly include a weaver and kindred workmen, and hence it is probable that amongst the Flemish immigrants were a number of men whose concern was the manufacture of cloth. But all this is conjectural, and the assertion that the Flemings were responsible for the establishment of the industry or the formation of the early gilds hangs on a very slender thread of possibilities.

When we reach the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, documentary evidence is more abundant, and one can form more definite opinions about the presence and influence of the aliens. Perhaps the best plan would be to present all the available data, and then draw our conclusions.

During the thirteenth century Flemings were to be found scattered throughout the county. The affairs of a family of Flemings are frequently referred to in the Wakefield Court Rolls,⁶ and the entries indicate that the family owned much property. In 1284 a certain William the Fleming held the vill of Wath-on-Deerne, near Barnsley, 'in capite' from the King,

¹ Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, i. 647.

² Halifax Antiquarian Society Reports, 1902-3.

³ *Pedes Finium, Com. Ebor.* (1202-3), Surtees Soc. publications, vol. xciv, p. 78.

⁴ Roger de Hoveden, *Chronica* (Rolls Series), i. 203-4.

⁵ *Yorks. Arch. Journal*, x. 379.

⁶ *Wakefield Manor Court Rolls* (Yorks. Arch. Soc., Record Series, 2 vols.), *passim*. See Index, under 'Fleming'.

and this district was occupied by a number of his fellow countrymen.¹ Similar families dwelt in other parts of the county;² they were apparently landowners, but as to their interest in industry we know nothing that might help to prove that they were fostering the woollen manufacture in Yorkshire.

Turning to York, where trade was developing quickly during the early part of the fourteenth century, we find many Flemings in the ranks of the freemen of that city. All who desired to take up any trade or business there were obliged to qualify themselves, and be enrolled on the list of freemen; hence the names given in that register are those of men engaged chiefly in industrial and commercial pursuits. In 1291, Walter the Fleming and Giles the Fleming were admitted to the freedom.³ In 1296 Giles of Brabant made his entry,⁴ and others followed during the subsequent years. Some of these men occupied important positions. Giles of Brabant rose to the dignity of bailiff in 1308-9;⁵ in 1298 Jacobus le Fleming was mayor,⁶ whilst the doughty Nicholas the Fleming occupied the mayoral chair from 1310 to 1315,⁷ and met his death when leading a York contingent against the Scots at the disastrous Battle of Myton (1319).⁸ These men were evidently much esteemed by their fellow citizens; but the Roll tells us nothing about their occupations. They may have been ordinary merchants engaged in the exportation of wool and perhaps concerned with its manufacture into cloth. But whilst silent concerning the business practised by these aliens, the Roll shows the presence of a number of native workers in wool, drawn from many parts of Yorkshire and other counties. There are thirteen names of textile workers entered during the reigns of the first two Edwards,⁹ and not one of them gives any suggestion of

¹ *Kirkby's Inquest* (Surtees Soc. publications, vol. xlviii, p. 1). See also Lay Subsidy, 25 Ed. I (Yorks. Arch. Soc., Record Series, vol. xv, p. 46).

² At West Lalling (*Kirkby's Inquest*, pp. 378-9) Nicholaus Flemyng, who became Mayor of York. Others at Fryton and Whitby (Lay Subsidy, 25 Ed. I, Yorks. Arch. Soc., Record Series, vol. xxi, pp. 53, 72, 108). Matthew de Laveyne living at Norton, mentioned in Assize Rolls, 36 Hen. III (Yorks. Arch. Soc., Record Series, xlv, 28).

Register of the Freemen of York (Surtees Soc., vol. xcvi), 20 Ed. I, p. 5.

³ *Ibid.*, 25 Ed. I. ⁴ *Kirkby's Inquest*, p. 380 n.

⁵ Freemen's Roll, 26-7 Ed. I. ⁶ *Ibid.*, 4-6 Ed. II.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18 n.

⁸ *Early History of York*, vol. iii, p. 438.

Flemish origin. There were William of Malton¹ and John of Wales,² fullers; John of Newcastle³ and Robert of Marsk,⁴ weavers; Williams of Easingwold⁵ and Richard of Leicester,⁶ chaloners (i.e. coverlet weavers); Wilfred of Leicester, dyer;⁷ John of Craven⁸ and John of Manchester,⁹ tailors; to say nothing of chapmen from Bristol, Lincoln, Wakefield, and Craven, 'Mercatores de Beverle', and mercers from Skipton, Ripon, Coventry, and Upsala.¹⁰ Thus, to sum up, two things are clear from a study of the early list of freemen:—(1) That in 1327 the making of cloth and wool was in the hands of Englishmen; (2) that increased numbers of enrolments were being made, showing a general expansion of trade in the city, and in this progress the cloth-makers stepped forward with the rest. All this was before the traditional migration began.

The granting of favours to foreign merchants had been a general feature of the economic policy of the thirteenth century. Now in the fourteenth the fostering of cloth-making took the place of importance, and in the Ordinance of May 1, 1326,¹¹ we have the declaration of a policy which was, in spite of many vicissitudes, to guide the development of the industry for some time to come. The most important points were:—(1) No person should wear foreign cloth, except royalty, nobility, and those paying an annual rental of £30 or over. (2) 'That in order to encourage people to work upon cloths, the King would have all men know that he will grant suitable franchises to the fullers, weavers, dyers, and other cloth workers who live mainly by this mystery, whenever such franchises are asked for.' (3) All alien merchants were taken under the King's protection. Edward III confirmed this declaration in the first year of his reign, and quickly added to it his offers of protection to foreign weavers. In July 1331 he issued letters of protection to John Kemp, 'Textor pannorum laneorum', and his employees, and the proclamation concluded with a general offer of similar favours to all foreign weavers, fullers, and dyers.¹² Six months later¹³

¹ Freeman's Roll, 25 Ed. I. ² Ibid., 13 Ed. II. ³ Ibid., 12 Ed. II.

⁴ Ibid., 20 Ed. II. ⁵ Ibid., 17 Ed. II. ⁶ Ibid., 1 Ed. II.

⁷ Ibid., 17 Ed. II. ⁸ Ibid., 11 Ed. II. ⁹ Ibid., 18 Ed. II.

¹⁰ Ibid., 26 Ed. I.

¹¹ Patent Rolls, 19 Ed. II, pt. ii, m. 8. Also 1 Ed. III, pt. ii, m. 24.

¹² Rymer, *Foedera*, iv. 496.

¹³ January 1333: Records edition of Rymer, vol. ii, pt. ii, p. 840.

the King again dispatched a general mandate to the sheriffs: 'Be it known unto you that we have taken into our protection all and singular weavers and other cloth-workers, from whatsoever part they come, along with their goods and implements.' The sheriffs were commanded to see that the ordinance was strictly obeyed.

Some years elapsed before the next declaration was made, and on this occasion it concerned two aliens who wished to settle in York.

'12th December 1336. The king to his sheriffs . . . greeting. Know ye that since William of Brabant and Hanekin of Brabant, weavers of the parts of Brabant, have come into our realm of England, and dwell in our city of York, there carrying on their occupation; we, being aware that if they engage in their industry within our realm manifold advantage and benefits will accrue to us and ours; . . . and for this reason, wishing that William and Hanekin should be free to attend to their business in peace and quietness; . . . we therefore take them . . . under our protection and defence, whilst they engage in the aforesaid occupation within our realm, along with their goods and all possessions whatsoever; . . . in which they shall be for the space of one year.'¹

This policy was firmly established in 1337, when an act was passed, providing a wide statutory basis of protection, promising security, and offering all necessary 'franchises' to alien cloth-makers.² Such offers came at an opportune time for the Low Country men. All was not well in Brabant and Flanders. The towns were full of faction strife, the gilds were drifting towards oligarchy, and the poorer artisans found themselves virtually disfranchised by the wealthier citizens. The gild monopoly was so strictly enforced that rural industry was almost impossible.³ Hence, to the members of the defeated factions, and to the poorer citizens, Edward's offers of protection would be very welcome, and some packed up their effects and came to partake of Edward's bounty.

Now arises the question, What was the extent of the migra-

¹ Rymer, *op. cit.*, iv. 723; also Patent Rolls, 10 Ed. III, pt. ii, m. 11.

² 11 Ed. III, c. 5 (*Statutes of the Realm*, vol. i, pp. 280-1). See also Rymer, *op. cit.*, iv. 751, and Patent Rolls, 11 Ed. III, pt. i, m. 6.

³ Ashley, *Economic History*, I. ii. 197-8. Also Cunningham, *op. cit.*, i.

tion to Yorkshire, and what was its influence upon the cloth industry there? In York itself the influx was considerable, and we meet several Flemings and men of Brabant amongst the freemen.¹ For instance, note the following entries in the Freemen's Roll:

- 1344. Nicholas de Admare, de Braban, webster.²
- 1352. Thomas Braban de Malyns, tixtor (weaver).³
- " Laurentius Conyng de Flandre, webster.
- " Georgius Fote de Flandre, walker (fuller).
- 1357. Gerwinus Giffard de Gaunt, tixtor.⁴
- " Levekyn Giffard, frater ejus, tixtor.
- 1359. Petrus de durdraght (Dordrecht), walker.⁵
- 1360. Arnaldus de Lovayne, teinturer (dyer).⁶

This list of names, which is by no means exhaustive, shows that by 1360 there was a complete set of textile workers from Belgium settled in York; weavers, dyers, fullers, in addition to tailors and merchants, had come from Ypres, Brabant, Malines, Ghent, Louvain, Bruges, &c. Some of these men were doubtless wealthy, had brought with them their households and workpeople, and had made homes in York.

The Fleming was in York. Further, there was a great expansion in the cloth trade, marked, as Miss Sellers has pointed out, by the enrolment of some 170 weavers, 100 dyers, 50 fullers, 30 chaloners, and a swarm of shearmen, wool-packers, &c., during the reign of Edward III.⁷ But we cannot lay the honour for this expansion at the feet of the immigrant. From the early years of the century there had been a steady development in the trade of the city. The cloth-makers shared in it, and their progress was accelerated by the government's policy of favouring the English manufactures. Judging from the Freemen's Roll, the Flemings did not appear in any numbers until about 1346-50, and before this time the expansion had become very marked. Textile workers from all parts of the county, and of

¹ We do not find the names of the two men who received the special letters from Edward III. This was probably because they were under the King's direct protection and favour, but as the protection was only for one year, one could have expected to find them taking up the freedom eventually.

² Freemen's Roll, 18 Ed. III.

³ Ibid., 26 Ed. III.

⁴ Ibid., 31 Ed. III.

⁵ Ibid., 33 Ed. III.

⁶ Ibid., 34 Ed. III.

⁷ *Victoria County History, Yorkshire*, iii. 439. The importance of these figures is discounted somewhat by the fact that many came in to fill the places of the victims of the Black Death.

the country, had taken the freedom of York before the Flemish invasion, as the following list will show :

- 1332. Willelmus de Hedon, tixtor.¹
- 1333. Willelmus de Selby, walker.²
- 1334. Johannes de Bristow (Bristol), webster.³
- 1336. Willelmus de Ripelay (Ripley), taynturer (dyer).⁴
- 1342. Thomas de Huntingdon, litester (dyer).⁵
- .. Walterus de Beverle, tixtor.
- .. Willelmus de Cravene, litester.
- 1344. Johannes de Hertipole, webster.⁶
- .. Johannes de Novo Castro, litester.
- 1345. Johannes de Appleby, litester.⁷
- 1346. Willelmus de Lyncoln, sheregrynder.⁸

There were more cloth-makers from Lincoln than from the whole of the Low Countries, and Lincoln had a reputation for superior cloths even in the twelfth century.⁹ It was therefore no decadent or infantile industrial community to which the men of Flanders and Brabant found their way. There was a boom already gathering force, and they simply helped to swell it. Their chief influence would be in the innovation of new varieties of cloth, and possibly of new methods of manufacture. The dyer of Louvain would introduce new hues, just as would his fellow-craftsmen from Lincoln, Stamford, and Grantham. The weaver of Ghent would have his favourite kinds of cloth, and his own ways of making them, just the same as the weaver of Huntingdon, Gloucester, Yarmouth, or Chester. Thus the aliens joined in the life of the city, but were by no means its dominating force. They shared in, and influenced to some extent, the progress of the fourteenth century, but they did not initiate it. Amid the developments of the following years, they occupied no positions of municipal importance, but took their places along with men from other parts of England in obedience to the decrees of city and gild.

Turning to the country districts, as seen in the Manor Court Rolls of Bradford¹⁰ and the Poll Tax Returns, we find evidence

¹ Freeman's Roll, 6 Ed. III.

² Ibid., 8 Ed. III.

³ Ibid., 18 Ed. III.

⁴ Salzmann, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

⁵ Ibid., 10 Ed. III.

⁶ Ibid., 19 Ed. III.

⁷ Ibid., 7 Ed. III.

⁸ Ibid., 16 Ed. III.

⁹ Ibid., 20 Ed. III.

¹⁰ A manuscript translation of these Rolls is in the Bradford Public Reference Library. It is in four volumes, and covers the period Edward III-Henry V.

of a flourishing cloth industry in almost every part of the West Riding, but very few immigrants from the Low Countries. The Bradford Court Rolls cover the first forty-five years of the reign of Edward III, the period when the immigration was at its height. There are many entries concerning the textile industry, but never once is there mention of a Fleming or 'Brabaner'. From a most careful examination of the Rolls one does not obtain the faintest trace of evidence indicating any Flemish settlement in Bradford. Mr. John Lister, who has examined the Wakefield Court Rolls, has informed the present writer that the name 'Fleming' occasionally occurs in these documents, but that there is no evidence to show that the people mentioned had any connexion with cloth-making. From the Poll Tax Returns of 1379 one gets a similar impression. Of course some of the aliens might have forsworn their foreign names, thus escaping our identification, and this possibility must be borne in mind. In the whole of the returns for the West Riding only seven textile workers from the Low Countries are recorded:

¹ Bawtry.	Iohannes de Braban et Agnes uxor eius, webster	vjd. (i.e. 6d.)
² Spofforth.	Iohannes Brabaner, Textor, et uxor eius .	vjd.
³ Skipton.	Petrus Brabaner, Webster, et uxor eius .	xijd.
	Petrus Brabayner, Webstre, et uxor eius .	vjd.
⁴ Wetherby.	Iohannes Brabayner, Textor	vjd.
⁵ Ripon.	Lamkynus de Braban, Textor	vjd.
⁶ Ripley	Iohannes Brabaner, Webster, et uxor eius .	vjd.

In addition to these names, there are about twenty-four other entries of a similar character, but with no occupation attached; as for instance:

- ⁷ Ledes. Henricus Brabaner et uxor eius,
- ⁸ Laughton. Walterus Lovayne, et Alicia uxor eius,
- ⁹ Acton. Iohannes de Flaundres et uxor eius.

In these instances the poll tax payment was usually fourpence or sixpence; this denotes comparative poverty, and hence these

¹ *Poll Tax Returns*, 2 Richard II (published by Yorks. Arch. Soc., ed. by Lister), p. 14.

² *Ibid.*, p. 223.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

people would be compelled to engage in some work, which might be weaving.¹

The number of aliens who entered the rural districts was small, and the new-comers were generally poor.² Could such an element exert any powerful industrial influence? There are at least two tests we can apply, though neither can be regarded as final. In the first place, does the distribution of the aliens mentioned above coincide with the active industrial areas, and was industry booming in the places wherein the 'Brabaners' had taken up their abode? Secondly, admitting that their influence might be slow in bearing fruit, do we find that the industry developed during the fifteenth century in those places favoured by the Flemings in the fourteenth? Do we meet any aliens in the area which witnessed such a great expansion in cloth-making during the fifteenth century, namely the Halifax parish?

Let us take one or two places conspicuous in the Poll Tax Returns for the number of persons engaged in the textile industry. Rotherham,³ for instance, was a populous centre, in which the tax was paid for some 350 persons. Here were five weavers, a coverlet weaver, three fullers, two shearmen, three dyers, in addition to tailors, drapers, and merchants. In all, fourteen men were engaged in the manufacture of cloth; but the most careful scrutiny fails to reveal the presence of any Flemings in the busy community. At Wakefield,⁴ payment was made by a 'wulchapman' (i. e. a dealer in wool), eight weavers, five fullers, two coverlet weavers, one dyer, four drapers, and several mercers and tailors. Here again there is no trace of exiles from the Low Countries. Ripon⁵ had its solitary 'Brabaner', who had gone to live in a town which had long been a small textile centre. He was only one out of the sixteen 'websters' who paid poll tax in that town. Pontefract, which paid the largest amount of taxation, had an abundance of cloth-makers, but no Flemings. Where the alien weaver is found, he is often almost

¹ In the returns for the East Riding, I can find only three Belgian names, and these not specifically clothiers (*Yorks. Arch. Journal*, xx. 329 et seq.).

² It will be noticed that most of the rural immigrants came from Brabant, while those in York came from various parts. Further, all the former are poor, only one person paying more than sixpence. Again, all are weavers.

³ *Poll Tax Returns*, p. 25.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 160-2.

done in his craft: Skipton,¹ with its two Flemings, had only two other weavers, whilst the Wetherby alien² had the company of only two native weavers. And so one might continue, showing that in other places, large and small, where the industry flourished, the alien was absent, and that when he did appear, it was generally in some centre where cloth had been made for some considerable period, or in an isolated quarter where he was almost the only one of his craft, and he himself far too poor to employ others in the trade. His influence in the latter place does not seem to have been great, for Bawtry, Spofforth, Wetherby, Ripley, Acton, and Laughton never appear at a subsequent date as important clothing centres.

Further, if we turn to the valleys of the Colne and Calder, to Halifax and the whole district west and south of Leeds, where the ulnagers' accounts of the fifteenth century indicate a great growth, we do not find the Fleming sowing the seed. In 1379 Halifax³ had its 'lyster', Liversedge its fullers,⁴ Elland its three weavers, coverlet weaver, three dyers and a fuller.⁵ But in the whole of the Halifax area the only name with a Flemish appearance is that of Roger Flemmyng of Sowerby Bridge, whose occupation is not stated. Indeed, with the exception of the two solitary 'Brabaners', father and son, at Skipton, one does not find any weavers from the Low Countries in any parts west of Leeds and Wakefield. And yet this region was the stronghold of the textile industry from the fifteenth century onwards.

One other matter is worthy of a moment's consideration. The influence of the Flemings would probably have been towards improving the standard of workmanship, and raising the quality of the wares produced. Now York and Beverley made cloths of considerable value, but the West Riding fabrics were always of an inferior grade until the nineteenth century. Even in the seventeenth century⁶ it was pointed out that Yorkshire clothiers used the same quality of wool as many West of England manufacturers, but the finished cloths from Yorkshire were much inferior to the pieces made from the same kind of wool in Wessex.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

² *Ibid.*, p. 222.

Ibid., p. 188.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁶ See evidence given during the big law-suit between the Yorkshire clothiers and the ulnager, 1638 (Chapter VI).

The difference was said to be due to less skilful sorting of the wools, and lower efficiency in carrying out the various processes. The West Yorkshire clothier, like his fellows in Lancashire, Wales, and the corners of Devon and Cornwall, was deficient in industrial skill. This may be due to the fact that few, if any, skilled workers, either alien or native, came to these parts, but concentrated in the towns and eastern districts.

Thus we come to the conclusion that the Flemish element in this county was small, and exerted little influence. In York the aliens came to swell a rising tide, but in the wide rural area over which cloth was being made their influence was negligible.¹

From all this discussion we return to the question with which we set out: Was the establishment of the industry due to the growth of the native domestic industry, or to the immigration of alien craftsmen? There is no proof of any large immigration of Flemish cloth-workers at any time before the middle of the fourteenth century, and then the influx was mainly confined to York. We are therefore driven to the other possibility, and to suggest that the establishment of manufacture for sale grew from manufacture for home use. Before the Conquest the domestic industry was in existence, the family demands for clothing being met by the family's work at the distaff and loom. This industry was not destroyed by the ravages of William I, and continued to be part and parcel of Yorkshire domestic life for centuries. Meanwhile, with the growth of population and the development of society generally during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it became possible for some men to earn a livelihood by devoting the whole, or the greater part, of their time to the manufacture of cloth. They then sold, or bartered, the produce of their labour to meet the local demand, and eventually supplied a wider market. This advance was first made in the towns of Beverley and York, but gradually specialized workers in wool appeared in the country districts. Such developments brought in their train the division of labour, one man becoming a weaver, the second a dyer, the third a fuller, and so forth. All this was a natural consequence of the growth

¹ Mr. J. Lister, who has spent twenty years on antiquarian research on the West-riding, agrees entirely with the conclusions arrived at above; though my own opinion was definitely formed before I had met Mr. Lister.

population, the increase in home and foreign trade, the presence in the county of plentiful supplies of wool and water, and the difficulty of making a livelihood out of agriculture alone. In its growth the industry possibly received some assistance and practical guidance from alien workmen, but there is nothing to show that these men were responsible either for the introduction of the industry, or for its subsequent development.

The Character of the Rural Industry during the Fourteenth Century

From the Poll Tax Returns and other MSS. one gathers some impressions of the general character of the industry as practised in the country districts and small towns during the reigns of Edward III and Richard II. The largest centres of population¹ lay east of Leeds, at Pontefract, Doncaster, and in the Vale of York. In these parts cloth-makers were plentiful, and tailors, drapers, and merchants equally so.² West of Leeds the industry claimed a smaller number of professional adherents, and was in a more primitive stage at yet. Leeds, standing midway between the two areas, was well supplied, having two 'lysters', two 'chalunhers', one walker or fuller, two 'talours', and one merchant.³ Where population was gathered round a castle or abbey, the industry was well established; Skipton, for instance, had four weavers, a fuller, draper, glover, merchant, and four 'cissores' or tailors.⁴

Wool was to be obtained almost everywhere, and weaving might be either a person's staple occupation, or merely an auxiliary industry, carried on by the man in his spare time, or by the members of his household. Even the parish clergy occasionally devoted their leisure to cloth-making, and the Bradford Manor Court Rolls for 1354 speak of the 'chaplain' of Bradford taking his cloths to the tenter-ground to be stretched and dried.⁵

¹ The Poll Tax Returns show that Pontefract had the largest population in the West Riding. Next came Doncaster, then in order of size followed Sheffeld, Selby, Tickhill, Rotherham, Wakefield, Snaith, Ripon, Leeds, Lanchester, Knaresborough, Bawtry, Bradford, Huddersfield, Halifax. See Price, *op. cit.*, p. 52 n.

² *Poll Tax Returns*; see for Doncaster, Selby, Pontefract, &c.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

Bradford Manor Rolls, 28 Ed. III, pp. 234-43.

The fulling industry was also widely scattered, and fulling-mills were to be found on the banks of every stream, even in the most remote places. Fulling had received an impetus from the act of 1376 7, which forbade the export of cloth until it had been properly fulled;¹ this, coupled with the growing demand for English cloth, made the fulling-mill a good source of revenue. Every manor which stood on a water-course possessed its mill, which was leased to one or two of the tenants for an annual rental. The Bradford mill, for instance, was let in the early forties to William and James Walker, at a rental of ten shillings per annum.² In 1346 James resigned his share of the mill to William, being 'unable to hold the said mill on account of poverty'.³ William retained his tenancy, aided by his son Thomas, and in 1353 managed to secure the monopoly of the fulling on the manor.⁴ In that year father and son⁵ went to the manor court, and gave to the landlord forty pence by the year of 'new rent' for the term of the father's life, being promised in return 'that there shall no strange fuller enter within the town and liberty of the Court of the Lord of Bradford, . . . neither shall anything be taken or carried out of the said town to be worked upon, nor shall any one use that craft in the said town, except (the Walkers) and their servants'.⁶

The dyer was in a similar position to the fuller, in that he could not carry on his occupation without the licence of the lord of the manor. The landlord might allow many dyers to practise in the same locality, or he might hand over the monopoly of the trade to one man. Instances of both practices are found in the Bradford Rolls. In the 'forties there was no monopoly, but a licence was essential before practising in the industry. In 1342 William Nutbrown was fined threepence for using the office of dyer without licence,⁷ and ten years later Walter Lister of Leeds was caught practising the same trade in Bradford

¹ *Statutes of the Realm*, 50 Ed. III, c. 7.

² *Survey of the Manor of Bradford*, 15 Ed. III. Transcript in the Bradford Reference Library.

³ *Manor Rolls*, 20 Ed. III, p. 80.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 27 Ed. III.

⁵ Thomas prospered greatly in his day. In 1360 he took a plot of the landlord's waste, 40 ft. by 30 ft., for a house to be situated there, and for the enlargement of his tenter-ground (*Rolls*, 34 Ed. III, p. 408). The Leeds fulling-mill let at 20s. per annum in 1342 (*Survey*, 15 Ed. III, printed in *Bradford Antiquarian*, ii. 137-8).

⁶ *Manor Rolls*, 27 Ed. III.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 16 Ed. III, p. 18.

but having paid the four shillings which was charged for the privilege of dyeing within the manor of Bradford. Lister was brought before the court, and ordered to pay the necessary sum.¹ Two years later Lister assumed the offensive, and 'took the office of dyer in Bradeforddale, so that no other shall be received to perform that office there this year, rendering therefore to the lord by the year four shillings'.² This grant apparently amounted to a monopoly.

The cloth industry was in the hands of men and women alike. Women were the brewers of the day; they might also be the weavers and dyers. Witness the following Poll Tax entries:

Thorpe iuxta Rypon.	Alicia Gare, Webster	vjd
Rypon.	Alicia de Bowland, Webster	xij ^d
"	Christiana Lyttester, Lyster	xij ^d
Eland.	Alicia and Isabella de Crosse, Websters	xij ^d

The ulnager's accounts for 1395-6-7 record payments for cloths made for sale by 'filia vicarii de Crayk',³ and Emma Earle of Wakefield;⁴ the latter was responsible for the manufacture of 48 cloths in 54 weeks, out of a total of 173½ cloths produced for sale in the Wakefield area. These industrious women remind one of the Wife of Bath.

'Of cloth making sche hadde such an haunt,
Sche posseth hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.'

In York women were admitted to the freedom.⁵ No woman could carry on a trade unless her name had been entered on the Freeman's Roll, and consequently many such names appear in that list. But the women's special field was that of spinning the wool. The distaff, the primitive apparatus for this process, was part of the equipment of every household, and spinning belonged to the common round of the day's toil. Wife and daughters were responsible for this work, and it seems that even

¹ Ibid., 34 Ed. III, p. 385.

² Ibid., 36 Ed. III, p. 445. Similarly, Robert Lyster of Halifax in 1382 was granted the monopoly of dyeing in the manor of Halifax (Lister and Ogden, *Poll Tax Returns for the Parish of Halifax*).

³ *Poll Tax Returns*, p. 254.

⁴ Ibid., p. 250.

⁵ Ibid., p. 183.

⁶ 'Particulars of Account of Wm. Skipwith, collector of ulnage and subsidy of saleable cloths . . . in the County of York', 1395-6 (Exch. K.R. Accounts, bundle 345, no. 15).

⁷ Similar account 1396-7 (Exch. K.R. Accounts, bundle 348, no. 17).

⁸ See preface to *Freemen's Register*.

of the date printers were employed, working for wages under a master. Thus, at the Halifax Tourn, April 6, 1372, Ibbot de Holgate and Matilda Winlove of Warley, spinsters, were accused of having taken wages contrary to the Statute of Labourers.¹

The status of the cloth-makers varied. In the smaller settlements they usually contributed only fourpence or sixpence to the Poll Tax, but in many places a shilling was paid. The corioret weaver, the dyers, the drapers, and some of the ordinary weavers of Rotherham were in the shilling class;² one of the weavers of Wakefield kept two servants, who probably gave assistance in the workshop, and his fellow wool-chapman paid 3s. 4d.³ From earlier sources we learn that many of these men had their toft of land, like the two cottar weavers at Skipton (1307).⁴ They generally had a little farm stock, with cows, horses, swine, and poultry, in addition to a little acreage under crops, thus being farmer and manufacturer in a small way.⁵ As such they bear a marked resemblance to the small clothiers who were so numerous in subsequent centuries.

Mention of the Skipton cottars draws our attention to the fact that many of the weavers mentioned during the thirteenth and fourteenth century were cottars. These men would have a small tenancy of land, probably six to twelve acres of arable, the cultivation of which would take up part of their time. They would look after their live stock, and perform the requisite number of day's service on the demesne lands, unless those services had been commuted. When all this had been done, they would still have at their disposal each week a number of days which would be occupied with cloth-making. As to the origin of these cottar weavers, one hesitates to generalize. Were

¹ 'Ibbot de Holgate et Matilda Winlove de Warlonley sunt filiatrices ad rotam et capiunt stipendium contra Statutum de Artificiis.' *Halifax Tourn.* (th April, 46 Ed. III (Lister and Ogden, *op. cit.*, p. 43).

² *Poll Tax Returns*, pp. 25 et seq.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 160-1.

⁴ *Inquisition Post Mortem*, 31 Ed. I (Yorks. Arch. Soc., Record Series, XXXVII, 103).

⁵ Types drawn from Lay Subsidy, 25 Ed. I (Yorks. Arch. Soc., Record Series, XXV, 114). *Wakefield*, 'Thomas Tinctor, j vaccam, precium iiii'; *Thorp*, 'sidimus (wheat) vs; jv quart. avene (oats)'; p. 2. *Burton-in-Lonsdale*, 'Ricardus Tinctor', 2 oxen 5s. each; 2 cows 3s. 5d. each, also various crops; p. 91. *Almondbury* (Almondbury), 'Iohannes Tinctor', 1 ox, 1 cow, 1 horse, also crops.

they small tenants because they were primarily weavers, or were they weavers because, being only small tenants, they had time to spare for weaving? The latter is the more likely, and probably explains the origin of the weaver class, one or two members of which appeared as cottars in so many villages during the thirteenth century. The cottar in his spare time might hire himself out as an agricultural labourer; or he might take up some industry, and in Yorkshire, as in the West of England, he turned to the manufacture of cloth.

There was some mobility of population throughout the county. In the ranks of the York freemen we find William the Cordwaner, Richard the Webster, William the Mercer, and John the Carpenter, all of Leeds; John of Holbeck, weaver, and John and Ralph of Pudsey, tailors. There were men of Leeds trading and brewing in Ripon, and merchants from Wakefield and Kendal were familiar figures throughout the West Riding.

The progress of the industry was frequently checked during the fourteenth century by great calamities. The Scottish Wars and the frequent raids¹ had disastrous effects on various parts of Yorkshire during the early decades, the most severe suffering being inflicted after the disastrous Battle of Myton-on-Swale in 1319. After a time the Scottish terror passed away, but the unseen scourge of plague now had to be faced. The loss of life caused by the Black Death was terrible, and Mr. Seebohm² estimated that quite one-half of the population of Yorkshire was carried away by pestilence during the reign of Edward III. The great outbreak of 1349 denuded abbeys,³ towns, and villages of their population, and subsequent outbreaks of pestilence claimed heavy toll from the cloth-makers. The population of York, for instance, in 1340 was between 30,000 and 40,000. From the Poll Tax returns for the city, one gathers that by 1379 the population had been reduced to between 11,000 and 13,000.⁴ There were many gaps in the ranks of the freemen, and each

¹ After Bannockburn the Scots raided as far as Skipton and the suburbs of York. After Myton they swept down the western parts of the county as far as Airedale (Price, *Leeds and its Neighbourhood*, p. 41; also *Chronicles of Meaux Abbey*, Rolls Series, ii. 337).

² 'The Black Death', in *Fortnightly Review*, 1865, p. 150.

³ At Meaux only ten men survived out of fifty, and it was necessary to appoint the sub-cellarer as abbot (*Chronicles of Meaux Abbey*, iii. 37 and 77).

⁴ *Victoria County History, Yorkshire*, iii. 441.

outbreak of plague was followed by a rush of new craftsmen to occupy the vacant places.¹

The country districts suffered almost as severely during these years of war, pestilence, and famine, and in small communities the recovery was much more slow. There was more than one serious famine, which, coupled with the Scots' raids, reduced the manors to a miserable plight. At Bradford, for instance, in 1342 the Hall was in ruins; the corn mill, which had been valued at £10 a year in 1311, now stood at £6 6s. 8d., and the fulling-mill, 'the building whereof is entirely unroofed', had decreased in its annual value from £1 to 8s. in the space of thirty years.² Then came the Black Death, especially acute in 1349, but rapacious enough in 1362. The Bradford Court Rolls give vivid pictures of the effects of these visitations. In 1349 twenty-two tenants 'closed their extreme days', to quote the euphemism employed in the Rolls, and under the stress of such events the whole social order collapsed for a time. Similar stories could be told of other villages, the sum total of which is that Yorkshire was depleted for many years of its population and wealth, and its progress seriously retarded. Hence the early career of the textile industry was very chequered. But the manufacture was never abandoned by the dwellers in the West Riding villages. Soil and climate prevented that, for these factors would not allow any population in the western parts of the country to subsist on a purely agricultural basis. Fourteenth-century farming was so primitive that tillage could only be successful under very favourable conditions of soil and weather. The Yorkshire valleys would produce indifferent crops only, and the growth of grain at this time occupied a small part of the tenants' attention. The land was most profitably employed in pastoral work. But even this, allied to a small production of crops, did not guarantee a livelihood to the population, and some supplementary occupation must therefore be followed. The district was naturally fitted for the manufacture of cloth, thanks to the supplies of wool and water, and the woollen industry therefore

¹ The number of new freemen admitted just prior to 1349 was about sixty per annum, but in 1349 no less than 208 enrolments were made. See *Victoria County History, Yorkshire*, iii. 441, for detailed figures.

² Survey of Manor of Bradford, 1342. See also M. C. D. Law, *The Story of Bradford* (Pitman, 1913), p. 52.

maintained itself amidst all the vicissitudes of plague and warfare, of high birth-rates and often higher death-rates.

d) Guild Organization in the Urban Textile Industry

The manufacture of cloth in the chief towns of Yorkshire passed at an early stage under gild control, and remained so until the decline of the urban industry in the sixteenth century. The gilds of York, Beverley, and Hull were very similar in character to those which existed in the big industrial and commercial centres throughout England; for this reason, therefore, a brief description of their economic functions will suffice. But whilst dwelling solely on the industrial work of the textile gilds, one must remember that their scope was much wider. The gilds embraced many of the most prominent features of social life. They concerned themselves with the tending of the sick, the burial of the dead, the support of religious observances, and the institution of regular feastings; lastly, they developed the rudiments of popular dramatic art by their pageants and amateur theatrical displays.

As to the origin, as well as much of the early history of the textile craft gilds, we are left in a wilderness of doubt. They may have come into existence as a normal consequence of industrial evolution, being formed when the industry had become sufficiently specialized and differentiated from other occupations. On the other hand, they may have been formed as associations of aliens settling in certain towns under royal protection.¹ But there is no evidence which will enable us to come to any conclusion of a satisfactory character, and the whole matter must remain problematic until some evidence comes in from a source as yet unknown.

The first notices of textile gilds are found in the early twelfth century, but it is not until 1164² that we find any mention of the weavers' gild in York.³ The city had evidently received its

¹ This is the general theory adopted by Dr. Cunningham. See Cunningham, *op. cit.*, i. 337.

² Pipe Roll, 11 Hen. II, and subsequent years.

³ The weavers' gild was soon followed by similar organizations amongst the glovers and curriers, saddlers, and hosiers, all of whom had gilds under royal warrant by 1179 (Pipe Roll, 26 Hen. II, printed in Bland, Brown, and Lawney, *English Economic History, Select Documents*, 1914, p. 114).

weavers' charter in that year or the previous one, and in return now began to make an annual contribution to the Exchequer. The charter was quite short, and its chief provision was the granting of a monopoly: 'No one except them (i. e. the York weavers) shall make any cloths, dyed or striped, in the whole of Yorkshire, except the men of York, unless it be others of the same occupation in Beverley, Kirkby, Thirsk, Malton, Scarborough, and other my royal boroughs (*aliis dominicis meis burgis*). And in return for this licence they shall give £10 annually to my Exchequer.'¹ The weavers of York were thus granted a monopoly for certain kinds of cloth, but for those kinds only. Further, the exemptions were numerous and important, for in addition to the five towns mentioned there were other royal boroughs, to all of which the saving clause would apply. The charter did, however, give York the control over the rural areas, though the value of that power would depend on the success with which it was enforced upon those outside the walls of the city.² Hence the charter in actual practice probably only meant that the weavers of dyed and striped cloth who dwelt in the neighbourhood of York had to contribute something towards the annual payment. Even when we have made this necessary modification, the privilege granted by the charter must have been important, and the gild of considerable size, for the 'firma' of £10 was a larger sum than that of any other weavers' gild in the country, London alone excepted. Moreover, £10 in the twelfth century would be equivalent to £150 to-day. Thus the privilege granted must have been of some value, or the gildsmen would not have agreed to pay so heavily for it.

The weavers' tribute was paid with great regularity throughout the reign of Henry II, and should one year have been missed, as in 1173, £20 was forwarded in the subsequent year.³ During the turbulent times of the following century the payment fell into arrears, even though Henry III renewed the charter in

¹ Quoted in Patent Rolls, 20 Ed. III, pt. iii, m. 19.

² Similarly the weavers of Lincoln were given a monopoly over the country within a radius of twelve miles around that city (Patent Rolls, 22 Ed. III, pt. ii, m. 22).

³ Pipe Rolls, 20 Hen. II, weavers' contribution omitted; 21 Hen. II, payment made for two years.

1220.¹ In 1238 the debt amounted to £165, in 1246 it was £210, and at last in 1268, matters reached a crisis, when the Sheriff received orders to enter the city and distrain the weavers for the whole of the arrears.² Whatever the result of the Sheriff's visit, matters were soon back in their former plight, and in 1275 the weavers once more appealed for exemption from payment, on the ground of their poverty.³ This poverty was probably due in part to the Sheriff's distraint, which, even if only partially carried out, would exhaust the weavers financially. Under these circumstances, there would be a keen desire on the part of many to escape from this over-taxed city to some place where manufacture could proceed under less costly conditions. Also, as we have seen in the preceding sections, a considerable amount of cloth-making was being carried on throughout the county, and this rivalry between town and country was possibly diminishing the demand for York cloths. At such a pass had the competition arrived that in 1304 the city weavers petitioned the King, showing 'that divers men in divers places in the county, fewhere than in the city or in the other towns and demesne boroughs . . . make dyed and rayed (striped) cloths, so that the weavers in the said city are unable to render their £10 yearly to the Exchequer'.⁴ Edward replied by instructing the Exchequer to cause inquiries to be made, and to compel all such as were found plying the craft in illegal places to refrain from such work henceforth. Unfortunately we do not know the result of this order, but the evidence of the fourteenth century proves that the city weavers never succeeded in perfecting their monopoly, and that the rural manufacture continued to flourish.

Turning to Beverley, we find the weavers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in a strange position. A manuscript dated about 1200⁵ contains the 'Law of the Fullers and Weavers of

¹ *Close Rolls Calendar*, 1220, i. 421, quoted by Gross, *Gild Merchant* (1890), i. 108 n.

² *Victoria County History, Yorkshire*, ii. 437.

³ *Close Rolls*, 3 Ed. I, m. 17.

⁴ *Close Rolls*, 32 Ed. I, m. 12. At Lincoln in 1348 we find the same complaints of a declining industry. The weavers declared that there 'were no weavers working in the city and the suburbs and circuit thereof before the 20th year of the reign of the present king'. Apparently there had been an exodus from Lincoln also. *Patent Rolls*, 22 Ed. III, pt. ii, m. 22.

⁵ Add. MSS. (Brit. Mus.) 14252, quoted by Leach, *Selden Soc.* publications,

Beverley'. This law declares that the weavers and fullers of the town 'can dry no cloth nor go out of the town to do any trade; nor can any free man be attainted by them, nor can they bear any witness. And if (a weaver or fuller) wishes to forswear his craft, he must do to him who is called Mayor and the Bailiffs of the town that which will make him to be received into the freedom of the town, and turn the tools out of his house.' No ostracism could be more complete. Here, evidently, the weaver was outside the pale of the burgess roll and merchant gild. So long as he remained a cloth-maker he had no caste in the town; he could not trade outside its walls, but must sell his pieces to the merchants, who had probably made this rule for his imprisonment. The municipal courts of justice were closed to him, and he could neither bring accusations nor bear witness against a free citizen of the town. If we try to explain these harsh restrictions by suggesting that the outcasts were foreigners, we are met at once by the fact that the prohibitions were imposed not on the nationality but on the craft, and would apply equally to native and alien. Leach suggests that the cause of the disqualifications lay in the fact that the weavers were the first important class of landless industrial workers, who were therefore tyrannized over by the more powerful sections of the community.¹ Salzmann holds that the cloth trade was in the hands of big capitalistic merchants, who utilized their power in the municipality to keep the cloth-makers in subservience.² This may have been possible, for the export trade in Beverley cloths would give the merchants a grip on the makers. But the most satisfactory theory is that which was put forward by Miss Bateson, who maintained that the weavers and fullers already had their powerful gild organizations before the town received its charter, and therefore did not take up the new franchises, deeming themselves strong enough behind the walls of their own society. Then, as the town government grew stronger, it began to impose disabilities

xiv. 135. Another copy of the 'Law' is found in the *Liber Custumarum* of London (Rolls Series), i. 130-1.

¹ *Beverley Town Documents*, ed. Leach, Selden Soc. publications, vol. xiv, p. xlix. Miss Bateson rejected this theory, and replaced it by the one outlined above. See *English Historical Review*, xvi. 200.

² Salzmann *op. cit.*, p. 133.

the weavers and fullers, because of their obstinate maintenance of their own separate organizations. Such a state of affairs would be similar to that existing in the fishmongers' and weavers' fraternities of London.¹ These two trades had obtained special immunities before the city had any really strong self-government. When the London municipal authority became more powerful, it resented the existence of these separate jurisdictions, and a long struggle ensued before the mayor and his colleagues were able to bring the gildsmen under the common rule. Meanwhile the weavers were denied the rights of freemen. If the same struggle took place in Beverley, the Law quoted above was the municipality's answer to the weavers' claim to independence. The conflict ended with the defeat of the weavers and fullers, for their next documentary appearance shows them to be entirely subservient to the town and its rulers.

During the fourteenth century, and probably during the thirteenth, there was a general movement towards organization amongst the urban crafts, and by 1400 the number of gilds in every large town almost equalled the number of occupations. At Beverley in 1390, thirty-eight crafts took part in the plays on Corpus Christi Day, amongst them being the weavers, dyers, coverlet weavers, fullers, and shearmen.² The number of crafts in York was naturally larger. A list of York plays, dated 1415,³ contains the names of 57 crafts, and a later list brings the number up to about 80.⁴ Of these the weavers, tapiters (or coverlet weavers), fullers, dyers, shearmen, wool-packers, and card-makers were connected with the cloth industry. The strength of these textile gilds in York can be estimated roughly from the ordinances edited by Miss M. Sellers in the *York Memorandum Book*.⁵ These ordinances, which are nearly all dated about 1400, are prefaced occasionally by a list of the masters of the fraternity. Probably the list of names is incomplete in some cases, and the actual membership was greater than the list of names suggests. Taking the four cloth-making

Unwin, *The Gilds and Companies of London* (1908), chap. iii.

¹ Selden Soc. publications, xiv. 33.

² Davies, *Municipal Records of York in the Fifteenth Century* (1843) pp. 233-6; also Drake, *Eboracum* (1737), app. xxix.

³ *Victoria County History, Yorkshire*, iii. 446.

⁴ *Suttons Soc.*, vol. cxx (1911).

crafts¹ of which a list of members is given, the numbers are as follows :

Fullers	30 names given
Tapiters	57 " "
Dyers	50 " "
Weavers	50 " " and others referred to.
Total	106

In addition to these crafts, there were the card-makers, hearmen,² wool-packers, and other small occupations, the total membership of which might amount to about 50. Thus there were some 250 masters in the city of York engaged in the manufacture of cloth and allied industries. York at that time contained a population of between 11,000 and 13,000 souls,³ which is equivalent to about 2,500 families. Therefore out of 2,500 heads of families, 250, or about one-tenth, were masters of some gild which regulated the making of cloth. Such an estimate does not take into account the merchants who traded in cloth, the retailers of cloth within the city, or the journeymen employed by the 250 masters : were it possible to ascertain the number of these men, it would be found that the manufacture and sale of woollen goods employed a very large part of the population of York.

In Hull the number of gilds was not so large, and the weavers of that town favoured linen rather than woollen fabrics.⁴ Pontefract had its craft gilds in the later years of the fifteenth century, if not before, for it is very probable that the largest town in the West Riding would have its gilds even before 1400.⁵ Concerning such towns as Doncaster, Ripon, and Selby, there is no evidence to show the existence of any textile gilds, although the industry flourished in these centres. Of Wakefield we know little more, but the fact that Mystery Plays were performed there would

¹ See Ordinances of these crafts, *Memorandum Book*, vol. i.

² The Ordinances of this craft are prefaced by seven names, and others are referred to (*Memorandum Book*, vol. i, pp. 78-81).

³ Estimate based on Poll Tax Returns ; see *Mem. Book*, vol. i, p. xxxiv. Also *Archæologia*, xx. 525, where Thomas Elyot, on the basis of a subsidy roll of 51 Ed. III, estimates the population of York at 10,800.

⁴ Lambert, *Two Thousand Years of Gild Life* (1891), prints ordinances of Hull craft gilds.

⁵ *The Booke of Entries of the Pontefract Corporation* (1653-1726) refers to gilds of the fifteenth century, p. 307.

suggest that there were gilds to perform these plays.¹ Thus our actual knowledge of Yorkshire textile gilds is confined to those of York, Hull, and Beverley; concerning the smaller towns in which the industry was carried on, we can only surmise that where industrial life flourished in any populous community some form of gild organization would be found.

The nature of the functions discharged by the textile gilds can be gathered to some extent from the ordinances which have been discovered. In no case do these ordinances go back beyond 1386, and are generally dated about 1400;² hence the picture presented is that of gild activity at the beginning of the fifteenth century. We know nothing of the work of the gilds during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Further, the picture is incomplete, for one cannot gain a comprehensive view of the gild through its ordinances any more than one can completely understand a nation by studying its statute book alone. Still we see enough to enable us to appreciate the extent to which the industry was subjected to regulation and restraint.

The purpose of the craft gild was to promote the welfare of its own particular industry. The policy always turned to that end, and in all decrees the gild sought to destroy evil practices, foster good work, and thus extend the demand for the wares of its members. Such results could only be achieved if it had complete control over all the workers at that craft within its area, and hence the first essential was that the gild should possess a monopoly of the local trade. In York the weavers obtained a limited monopoly over the county, but we have already seen the actual value of that privilege. Still York clung tenaciously to the letter of its rights, and at almost regular intervals petitioned the King, informing him 'that contrary to the charter of Henry II, many foreign weavers of the County of York have made and woven cloths dyed and rayed, and daily continue so to do, to the grave loss of the weavers of the city, and delay of the payment of the yearly ferm'.³ The petition

¹ The Towneley Mystery Plays. See *Victoria County History, Yorkshire*, iii. 145.

² Dates of ordinances: *York*. Fullers, 1390?; weavers, 1400; dyers, 1401; shearmen, 1405. *Beverley*. Weavers, 1406. *Hull*. Weavers, 1490.

³ Patent Rolls, 22 Rich. II, pt. ii, m. 20 d, and 1 Hen. IV, pt. vii, m. 5. See Ancient Petitions, no. 10273, asking for commission, 1399.

usually resulted in a commission of inquiry, followed by a renewal of the old charter. Such renewals were effected in 1220,¹ 1346,² 1377,³ 1400,⁴ 1414,⁵ 1468,⁶ and at other times, nearly always, it will be noticed, at the beginning of a new reign. Similar monopolies were enjoyed by the weavers' gilds of Beverley and Hull, no person being permitted to establish himself as a weaver in these towns unless he was a member of the local gild. By this monopoly the gild hoped to control industry, check competition, encourage trade, and increase the membership of the gild, new members helping to bear the burden of the craft's social expenditure and its contributions to the municipal or national exchequer.

The term 'foreign' in the York petition quoted above might refer to Flemings or to Englishmen, for both were foreigners or strangers unless they belonged to the weavers' fraternity. All crafts made special provision for the stranger within the gate, and almost every set of ordinances contained some clause indicating the reception which was to be given to the man who came to the town, seeking permission to set up in a trade, or to serve as a journeyman. The weavers of York declared, in 1400, that no stranger should be received henceforth to work in that city, unless he first produced authentic and satisfactory certificates from the place of his former habitation as to his faithfulness and right conversation.⁷ The dyers demanded evidence that the stranger had been fully apprenticed and was properly skilled,⁸ and the shearmen and coverlet weavers⁹ ordered that the new-comer should be examined by the searchers of the craft touching his moral and industrial character.¹⁰ The stranger from beyond the seas received less kindly consideration, and the tendency was towards excluding the alien proper from participation in the industrial life of the city. Thus the coverlet weavers of York in 1419 issued very stringent anti-alien regulations. No

¹ *Close Rolls Calendar*, i. 421, quoted by Gross, *Gild Merchant* (1890), i. 108 n.

² *Patent Rolls*, 20 Ed. III, pt. iii, m. 19.

³ *Ibid.*, 1 Rich. II, pt. ii, m. 35.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 Hen. IV, pt. vii, m. 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2 Hen. V, pt. ii, m. 39.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 8 Ed. IV, pt. ii, m. 13.

⁷ Weavers' Ordinances, *Mem. Book*, i. 242.

⁸ Dyers' Ordinances, *ibid.*, i. 113.

⁹ *Ibid.*, i. 85, 100, 107.

¹⁰ The card-makers demanded that the stranger should produce 'sufficeant recorde . . . be (by) letters under seale auctentyke of hys conversacion and of hys gude fame', or be able to find satisfactory pledges for himself and his deeds (*Mem. Book*, i. 80).

master was allowed to take an apprentice unless that apprentice was English-born and a freeman ('nisi ille apprentices sit natus Anglicos et liber homo'), under pain of a £2 fine.¹ Further, it was decreed that if any alien wished to set up as a coverlet-master within York, he should pay to the city council £2 13s. 4d., and to the craft £1 6s. 8d., a total sum equivalent to £48 in modern money.²

Though membership of the gild was insisted upon, the conditions of entry were far from easy. One aim of the gild was to guarantee good workmanship, and this could only be effected by properly trained and experienced craftsmen: therefore apprenticeship was one of the corner-stones of the gild system. The would-be master must begin at the very bottom of the ladder, and become formally apprenticed to some fully recognized master of the trade which he wished to learn. The whole system of apprenticeship was hedged round with detailed regulations. The number of apprentices which a master might have at the same time was often fixed, and the Hull weaver was not permitted to take more than two youths into his charge at the same time.³ On indenturing the apprentice, the master was to report his transaction to the executive of the craft, enter the name of his protégé in the register, and pay for him an entrance fee which varied from sixpence to half-a-crown, or even more.⁴ The apprentice then entered upon a period of training which was fixed in almost every gild at not less than seven years. The card-makers⁵ of York declared that 'Na maistre . . . take any apprentice or any servant in maner or fourme of apprentice . . . for lesse terme than . . . seven yerys togyder, and that be (by) indenture, (under) payne of xij^s . . . iij^d'; and the Hull weavers insisted that 'No mann sett up a loome wythyn hys howsse bot if he have bene prentyse vij yere at that occupation, under payne of x^{li} (£10)', a heavy fine if inflicted in full.⁶

During the seven years for which he was bound to his master, the apprentice learned the theory and practice of his trade. Having then reached years of discretion, and attained a fair degree of proficiency, he could now step at once to the rank of

¹ *Mem. Book*, i. 109.

² *Ibid.*, i. 109.

³ Lambert, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

⁴ See York Ordinances, *Mem. Book*, i. 100, 113, &c. The apprenticeship fee in the dyers' gild was £1.

⁵ *Mem. Book*, i. 80.

⁶ Lambert, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

a master, or enter an intermediary stage as a journeyman. In either case he was obliged to make his entry into the gild, and pay the required fee. Should he wish to become a fully fledged master, setting up a stock of weaving apparatus, the craft authorities came to his premises, to ascertain if 'his werkhowsse be goode and able'.¹ At York the searchers were generally accompanied by a number of masters, who came down to the candidate's workroom and examined him to see that he was proficient, and sufficiently skilled to carry on the work of a master craftsman. The coverlet weavers were to be satisfied, through the investigations of their searchers, that any applicant for admission was 'habilis et sciens . . . ad operandum et occupandum ut magister in artificio'.² The fullers of York made a strange stipulation, based on the nature of the fullers' work. The master fuller, in his operations, would receive large numbers of pieces from weavers, to be fulled in his mill. He might tear or spoil a piece in the fulling stocks, or he might even lose it. It was necessary therefore that some security should be provided to those who placed their wares in the fuller's hands. The craft ordinances made provision to meet this possibility, and declared that the would-be master should not merely be proficient in his art, but should also prove that he possessed property to the value of four marks, so that if he lost a cloth entrusted to him he would have the wherewithal to make good his loss to the owner of the piece.³

Having passed his examination, the candidate now paid his entrance fee, two shillings at Beverley,⁴ but much more at York. At the latter place the weaver, on setting up his loom, or the dyer, on acquiring his vat, was obliged to pay £1 for his 'upsett';⁵ the shearman paid only 6s. 8d.,⁶ and the fuller half that sum (in addition to guaranteeing the reserve of four marks).⁷ When we multiply these sums by twelve, so as to convert them into terms of modern money, it becomes evident that at the beginning of the fifteenth century entry into the York textile guilds was hedged about with many conditions, and barred by heavy entrance fees, which must have presented great obstacles

¹ Lambert, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

² *Mem. Book*, i. 109.

³ *Ibid.*, i. 71.

⁴ *Beverley Weavers' Ordinances* (*Hist. MSS. Comm.*), p. 94.

⁵ *Mem. Book*, i. 243.

⁶ *Ibid.*, i. 108.

⁷ *Ibid.*, i. 72.

to the poorer members of the community who sought admission.

There were in the field of industry three classes of workers, the master, the journeyman, and the apprentice. Of these only the master enjoyed the full privileges of complete membership, and the craft guilds were thus associations of masters rather than associations of men. The master alone was eligible for the offices of the gild, and he alone voted in the elections.¹ But the gild did not confine its attention to the master alone; and affairs of the journeymen and apprentices were also regulated in every detail. The journeyman was an inferior grade of member, who did not pay so large an annual contribution to the gild coffers as his employer. The master could not employ him without the consent of the gild, and, should the journeyman have any cause for complaint against his master, he could complain to the searchers of the craft, who would take up his case and give a decision. Thus, if a master refused to pay the proper rate of wages, or fell into arrears with his wage payments, the journeyman could appeal to the alderman of the gild, who would insist upon due and complete recompense, and should the master fail in his obligation the municipal authorities could be called upon to make a distraint on the master's goods.² On the other hand, any misdemeanours on the part of the employee were punished with marked severity, and the regulations for journeymen were numerous. No man was to be employed simultaneously by two masters,³ and any workman guilty of fraudulent or faulty work was heavily punished. The dyers of York declared that a man who did faulty work to the extent of twelve pence was to be fined forty pence for the first offence and half a mark for the second; if convicted a third time, he was to be expelled from the occupation, and forbidden to engage in the dyeing industry henceforth.⁴ The journeyman's tongue was also placed under control; a heavy fine was inflicted upon the Hull workmen who 'of malice make any talys contrary to treuth to th'entent to make discorde and debate among any of the sayd occupacon',⁵ and the Beverley weavers announced

¹ Lambert, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

² *Beverley Weavers' Ordinances (Hist. MSS. Comm.)*, p. 94.

³ *Mem. Book*, i. 97.

⁴ *Ibid.*, i. 114; half a mark equals 6s. 8d.

⁵ Lambert, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

'that if any of the servants of the craft called a journeyman is accused of fraud before the Keepers of Beverley or officers of the craft, he shall serve no master of the craft unless he be able to prove a lawful excuse'.¹

The craft gilds also regulated the employment of women. We have already noted the presence of women workers in both urban and rural textile industries. They were in the ranks of the freemen of York, and they appear to have formed a large element in the weaving craft of that city, ranking both as masters and as employees. So strong were they that in the Ulhager's Account for the city in 1395 about one-quarter of the cloths entered for that year as subject to the payment of ulnage and subsidy were entered in the names of women,² which meant that these cloths were made either by women or by men who were in the employment of female masters of the craft. Their work about this time was evidently failing to give satisfaction, or it may be that their strength in the industry was beginning to arouse the envy of their male colleagues. Which of these alternatives was the correct one it is impossible to state, but we know that in 1400, when the gild underwent a thorough spring cleaning, it was decreed that in future only those women who had been well taught and approved by the craft officials should be allowed to weave, lest by their poor work the women should prejudice the craft and make it difficult to raise the annual £10 for the Exchequer.³ In the dyeing trade⁴ a woman was permitted to carry on the work for one year after the death of her husband, after which she must either pay 20s., the entrance fee for herself, or allow her chief servant to take up the business in his name as master of the craft. Hence in the list of members we find the names of two women, one the widow, the other the daughter, of former members. The women weavers of Beverley were under similar control,⁵ and the earliest by-laws we possess of the Hull weavers (1490) declared that 'ther shall no woman

¹ *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, p. 94.

² *Exch. Accounts*, bundle 345, no. 16. For the calculation see *Mem. Book*, intro., p. xxvii.

³ *Mem. Book*, p. 243. This clause may have aimed at the prevention of cheap female labour. The same trouble arose in Bristol during the fifteenth century. See *Little Red Book of Bristol*, ii. 127.

⁴ *Mem. Book*, i. 114.

⁵ *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, p. 94.

worke in any warke concernyng this occupacon within the towne of Hull, upon payn of xl^s.¹

In the actual workaday life of the members, the power of the gild was constantly asserted. Work on Sundays and feast days was forbidden.² Many crafts regulated the hours of labour, and forbade night work, as in the case of the York coverlet weavers, who were permitted to weave only so long as the light of day was reasonably strong enough to allow them to ply the shuttle with ease.³ The gild stated the fees which masters were to demand for fulling cloths, and other similar charges.⁴ At the same time wage-rates were often fixed. In 1405 the shearmen of York established a maximum daily wage for their employees,⁵ with fines to be levied on such as paid more than this sum; and in 1400 the weavers drew up a piece-rate list for journeymen weavers.⁶

The gild aimed at inducing honest relations between the various members of the craft, and for this purpose made numerous decrees to prevent any member from enriching himself unfairly at the expense of his fellows. Masters were forbidden to attempt to entice any apprentice or journeyman to leave his master before his full term of service had been accomplished, and offences of this character met with strong condemnation.⁷ Similarly, any attempt to entice customers, or to forestall a rival in obtaining orders, was forbidden, as being contrary to the principles of fair trade.⁸ The same idea lay at the bottom of the prohibition of 'hawking' or 'peddling'. Gildsmen were forbidden to go from house to house seeking customers; they were to confine themselves to the proper market accommodation provided for them, and were not to attempt to push the sale of their wares by

¹ Lambert, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

² *Mem. Book*, Shearmen, i. 107; Fullers, i. 71.

³ *Ibid.*, i. 85.

⁴ *Ibid.*, i. 71. One penny per cloth for fulling, twopence for fulling and burling.

⁵ *Ibid.*, i. 107.

⁶ *Ibid.*, i. 244. The list was as follows: For weaving 8 ells or less, 14d.; 9-10 ells, 16d.; 11 ells, 18d.; 12 ells, 20d.; 13 ells, 25. 4d.; 14 ells, 25. 8d.

⁷ See Ordinances, *passim*.

⁸ *Ibid.*, i. 113-14. The dyers forbade any master to send his servants out of the city to bring in wool or cloth, or to meet strangers coming to York with wool or cloth to be dyed. Further, no master was by gifts or presents to entice the customer of another dyer to transfer his custom to himself. Such practices were regarded as violations of equality of opportunity and fair trade.

going 'thurgh the citee' or in streets and lanes 'fra house to house in maner of hauking'.¹

From fair trade to honest workmanship was but a short step, and the gild laid a heavy hand upon those whose work did not fulfil the required standard of quality. The weaver who put bad or insufficient material into his piece, or who wove it faultily, the fuller who lost or damaged the cloth in fulling, the shearman who was careless in finishing the fabric, the dyer who used improper materials for dyeing, all were liable to a heavy fine, and occasionally to the confiscation of the offending material. With the coverlet weavers of York the punishment for bad workmanship was especially severe. For the first offence the coverlets were confiscated, and if a master repeatedly transgressed he came under the special supervision of the searchers as an inefficient weaver. By them he was warned and admonished to improve the quality of his work, but if it was eventually found that he was quite incapable of improvement, his loom was confiscated, and he was forbidden to continue in that occupation.²

For the effectual administration of these and other branches of gild activity, certain officials, forming an executive, were necessary. The government of the weavers' gild at York and Beverley was in the hands of an alderman, who presided over the craft, stewards or bailiffs, who assisted him, and a beadle or summoner.³ These men were elected annually by the whole body of master craftsmen, gathered together in the Prime Gild or annual general meeting. The alderman acted as judge on all matters relating to gild ordinances and their infringement, and was far more than a figurehead. He had the power to summon special meetings when any matter of importance called for immediate decision, and those who disregarded his summons to attend were fined the customary amount in wax or money. All masters were eligible for election to the office, and any one refusing to take office when elected incurred the displeasure of the craft, and was subject to a heavy fine. At the same time it was necessary that any person elected to office should know all the details of the trade, and be a fully qualified craftsman, and the weavers of York in 1400 declared therefore that no man

¹ Card-makers' Ordinances, *Mem. Book*, i. 81.

² *Ibid.*, i. 86.

³ *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, p. 94

should be elected, unless he was known to be just and faithful, and also expert and perfect in his craft.¹ The weavers' gild of York was unique amongst the textile craft organizations of that city, in that it was founded by royal charter. The other gilds were based only on municipal sanction, and were much more directly subservient than the weavers to the municipality. In these gilds, therefore, there was no alderman at the head of affairs. The mayor of the city seems to have taken his place, and to have discharged most of the functions which fell to the lot of the alderman of the weavers. In the ordinances and lists of members of the shearmen, coverlet weavers, dyers, &c., of York there is no mention of the alderman and no provision for his election. In his place stands the mayor, the head of the city and also of the craft gild.

The most energetic members of the gild executive were the searchers, two or four in number, who were appointed to make periodical inspection of all workrooms, and by their vigilance enforce the ordinances of the fraternity. The searchers, when elected, took an oath of faithful service before the city magistrates, and their names were entered in the municipal records.² They then went forth on their task as industrial policemen, supervising the 'upsett' of new masters, the employment and payment of journeymen, the taking of strangers and apprentices, the quality of the work done, and the method of disposing of the finished article. They were also financial agents of the society, and collected all levies and fines; one of the chief functions of the searchers in the weavers' craft of York was the gathering of the annual farm of £10, and this was probably the most difficult part of their work.³ In nearly all the York gilds the searchers were accompanied in their visitation by an equal number of masters, who were elected to assist and supervise them in the discharge of their duties. Once a week these men made a systematic tour of all the workrooms and shops under their control. When any fault or bad work was discovered,

¹ *Mem. Book*, i. 242.

² *Minute Book of Beverley Corporation (Hist. MSS. Comm.)*, p. 113: 'Supervisores: Iohannes Bayledon et Willelmus Belasys electi sunt scrutatores et supervisores artis textorum pro anno futuro et iurati sunt' (1432).

³ *Mem. Book*, i. 242-3. In the collection of this money the searchers could bring pressure to bear on the weaver, and as a last resort could distrain on his loom and weaving utensils.

the goods were at once confiscated (provided they belonged to the culprit) and the offender taken before the mayor, to receive correction and to be mulcted of the fine fixed in the craft ordinances. Part of the fine was taken by the city and part passed into the hands of the searcher, either to pay his wages or to meet the various expenses incurred by the gild.¹

In his visitations the searcher was protected from insult and assault at the hands of the craftsman, and every gild imposed severe penalties upon those who refused admission to the searcher or behaved obstinately towards any members of the gild executive. On the other hand, the officials of the gild were by no means immune from control, or absolute in their power over the brotherhood. Any laxity or oppression in the discharge of their duties was severely punished, and those in charge of the gild's finances were held responsible at the end of their term of office for any arrears of payments or financial mismanagement.

In the preceding paragraphs we have observed that the municipal authority played a large part in the affairs of the gild. This was natural, for the gilds required sanction and recognition for their organization, such as would enable them to enforce their decrees. It would be useless for the weavers to draw up elaborate orders for the regulation of their trade, unless they had behind them the power to enforce their wishes upon every weaver in the community. From two sources could this power be drawn. The first was the King, who had granted the charters to some gilds during the twelfth century, and was frequently approached to grant new charters or renew the existing ones. Secondly, the craft might solicit the aid of the governing body of the town in which it was situated, and seek municipal assistance in discharging the duties for which it had been established. This course was necessary, even in the case of gilds which had been established under royal charter, and the York weavers, armed though they were with the sanction of kings, were also

¹ See Ordinances, *passim* (*Mem. Book*). Cases of searchers' work are to be found in the *Beverley Corporation Books* (*Hist. MSS. Comm.*). *Bad Work*, 16 Hen. VI. 'Ioh. Briggehous, webster, pro defectu artificii sui invento in medietate alterius panni lanei Aliciae Marshall. . . . Et fullones noluerunt operare dictum pannum quia non erat habilis: ideo ipse Ioh. Burgeys posuit dictum pannum ad unum fullonem patriae in deceptionem et defraudationem communis populi' (p. 119). *Insolence*, 10 Hen. VI. Same man, Brighouse, 'pro rebellion et iniusta gubernatione sua versus aldermannum', fined 3s. 4d. to city, and 3s. 4d. to craft (p. 113).

dependent upon the authorities of their city. Further, a study of the ordinances of many of the York gilds leads one to the strong conviction that many gilds were the actual creation of the town authorities.¹ Under these circumstances, the municipality exercised powerful control, legislative, judicial, and financial, over the gild. No gild decrees possessed any force until they had received the sanction of the mayor and his colleagues.² Should a revision of the craft ordinances be required it might be effected by the gild, but the new rules must then be submitted for the approval and endorsement of the municipal authorities. At the same time the town council, if it felt the need for such revision, might take the initiative and draw up amendments, which were then submitted to the gild for its assent and consent. Nor was this all, for the civic authority had power of itself to issue regulations for the general control of the whole industrial population or for the guidance of any one section. This was part of its economic function, and stood alongside the issue of by-laws concerning sanitation, the fixing of prices in the assize of bread, &c. Hence the city frequently made ordinances which applied to craftsmen as a whole, or to some particular craft, and which might supersede the gild by-laws, thus removing friction between divergent interests and shaping a unified municipal economic policy.

In the enforcement of its decrees and the infliction of punishment upon offenders the gild was dependent upon the municipal courts. The alderman of the weavers' gild had a certain judicial power, but it was frequently necessary to appeal to the judicial

¹ The town council was responsible for the general, social, and economic welfare of the community. In the city were many industries, some of which had voluntarily formed themselves into gilds, presumably with beneficial results. For those occupations which still remained unorganized the city must act as guide. The city authorities therefore took the initiative, called the craftsmen together, and led them to the drafting of ordinances, the appointment of searchers, and other steps necessary for the establishment of a gild. There is little direct evidence to support this view, but the whole tone of many gild ordinances convinces one that these gilds were brought into existence in this manner.

² The weavers' ordinances at Beverley were issued 'with the assent of the community of the town' (*Hist. MSS. Comm.*, p. 93). Weavers' ordinances at Hull (1490) were 'made amongst themselves, ratified and confirmed by the mayor, with the consent and agreement of all his brother aldermen' (Lambert, *op. cit.*, p. 204). Weavers' ordinances at York were put into operation 'with the approval and consent of all the weavers, by the licence, strength, and virtue of the royal charters, and by the licence and assistance of the mayor and sheriff' (*Mem. Book*, i. 242).

head of the city for moral support. In return for this and other favours, the municipality claimed a large measure of financial control over the craft gild. From industry, individual and organized, the city coffers received a considerable income. In Beverley the weaver paid a farthing for every four cloths he wove, and the fuller paid a similar amount for every two cloths fulled; twopence was charged on the sale of each sack of wool, and a penny on each whole cloth sold.¹ Further, the city claimed a portion of all fees and fines paid by the gildsmen. In Beverley one-half of almost every fine inflicted by the gild went into the municipal purse, and the weaver of deceitful cloth, to quote one instance only, forfeited 3s. 4d. to the gild and the same sum to the town.² At York the proportion varied. The weavers' fines were allocated to the fund for paying the annual farm to the Exchequer, but in all the other gilds the municipal treasury claimed its share of the spoils. In some instances one-half the fine went to the '*communitas civitatis Ebor.*', or, as it was expressed in some of the ordinances, to the '*chaumbre de conseil sur le pount de Use en Everwyk*'.³ In the coverlet weavers' and a few other crafts the city's claim was stronger, and in these cases no less than two-thirds of the various fines and payments passed into the hands of the municipality.⁴

Such was the gild life under which the manufacture of cloth was carried on in the urban centres about 1400. In each large town were these craft organizations, more or less highly developed, concerning themselves with the manifold activities of town life, social and religious as well as economic, and yet in all things subject to the general supervision of the municipal authorities. Whether the above is a fair picture of the gilds in their prime one cannot say, because of the lack of evidence of an earlier date. Before many decades had passed, the industry had begun to decline in the towns. Overtaxed and over-regulated, the weavers of York and Beverley were unable to withstand the competition which came from the rural areas, and the centre of gravity in the industry passed westward. In that day the fate of the gilds was sealed, and by 1600 their importance was a thing of the past. But the story of that decline from power must be left to the next chapter.

¹ *Beverley Town Documents* (Selden Soc.), xiv. 2.

² *Mem. Book*, i. 97.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴ *Ibid.*, i. 85.

CHAPTER II

DECAY AND EXPANSION DURING THE FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES

THE fifteenth and sixteenth centuries constitute an epoch of fundamental changes in the history of mankind. The discovery of new continents and the readjustments in social life, politics, religion, &c., were accompanied by the decay of much which had been all-important in the life of preceding centuries. Men were finding new worlds for themselves, and abandoning many of their old forms and systems.

In the sphere of English industry and commerce the same movements can be traced, and economic society underwent radical transformations. It is generally agreed that the fifteenth century was one of great expansion in the cloth industry.¹ The developments of the previous century were no whit abated, and as the manufacture spread over wider areas the 'makeng of cloth' became, in the words of the House of Commons, 'the grettest occupacon and lyving of the poore people of the land'.² The policy of the government, from 1450 onward, was strongly protectionist, and efforts were made to foster native industries. In 1463 the importation of woollen caps, woollen cloth, and other manufactures was forbidden,³ and scales of export duties were so framed as to encourage the shipping of cloth rather than of wool.⁴ These efforts to keep the raw material in the country were partly successful, for in spite of the increasing output of wool an actually smaller quantity passed over to the looms of the Continent. The subsidy on wool exported to Calais amounted in 1348 to £68,000; in 1448 it had sunk to £12,000,⁵ and the average for the years 1428-61 was only about £31,000.⁶ The

¹ See Abram, *Social England in the Fifteenth Century* (1909), chap. i. Cunningham says that the cloth industry and the rise of the native merchant class were the only two bright spots in an otherwise gloomy century (*op. cit.*, i. 373).

² *Rot. Parl.*, v. 274, quoted by Abram, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

³ Ed. IV, c. 4. Renewed and made permanent by 4 Ed. IV, c. 1.

⁴ Ashley, *op. cit.*, ii. 226.

⁵ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, i. 434 n.

⁶ J. H. Ramsay, *Lancaster and York*, ii. 267.

day of the great wool exporters was nearly at an end, and the 30,000 sacks exported annually in the fourteenth century dwindled to less than 9,000 before 1500, and to under 5,000 by the death of Henry VIII.¹

Meanwhile the export of English cloth grew rapidly. In the fourteenth century English pieces had gone to Germany, Gascony, Spain, Portugal, and the Low Countries,² but the total export, about 1350, was not more than 5,000 pieces per annum.³ This number had risen by 1500 to more than 84,000,⁴ and during the sixteenth century the amount increased still more, as Hansards, Merchant Adventurers, and Eastland Merchants carried English cloths into the very heart of Europe, to places which had formerly been the home of the industry. For this expansion of the English manufacture had helped to bring distress and decay on the foreign cloth-makers. Bruges, which in the thirteenth century had boasted its 40,000 looms, stood, at the end of the fifteenth, desolate and deserted. The 4,000 textile workers of Ypres (1408), had shrunk by 1486 to a mere handful, and the whole industry of the Low Countries had suffered the 'misery of a century of slow death - a misery on which the English weaver thrived and fattened'.⁵

With the growth of manufacture and the coming of 'high commerce', the mediaeval economic system was strained till it eventually broke. The expansion in the cloth trade called for a great increase in production, but the gild-ridden urban industry was incapable of meeting the growing demand. Foreign trade required an elasticity and enterprise such as were not to be found under the gilds. The gildsman who wished to increase his output found his path bestrewn with all manner of gild regulations, restrictions, and financial burdens, which increased the cost of production as well as the cost of living. Hence the urban industry was ill-equipped to face the competition of the manufacturies already well established in the rural areas and

¹ Mrs. J. R. Green, *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century*, i. 51.

² Close Rolls, 22 Ed. III, pt. i, m. 8.

³ Ashley, *op. cit.*, i. ii. 225.

⁴ Mrs. Green, *op. cit.*, i. 51. The Hansards exported 4,464 pieces in 1422, and 21,380 in 1500 (Schanz, *Englische Handelspolitik*, ii. 28, quoted by Ashley, *op. cit.*, i. ii. 225-6).

⁵ Mrs. Green, *op. cit.*, i. 65-6. The English competition was only a small cause of the Belgian decline; but England reaped a great amount of benefit therefrom.

smaller towns. In these places there were few industrial laws to fetter the weaver's activities; the 'rates were low', and the cost of living below that of the town. Here also was a supply of unemployed labour, turned adrift by the economic upheavals of the sixteenth century. All these conditions were favourable for the production of cloth in increasing quantities at a comparatively cheap rate.

Such were the forces at work during the two centuries under consideration. We see the results, firstly in the decline of York and Beverley as industrial centres, and secondly in the outburst of industrial life in the West Riding.

a) Decline of the Textile Industry in Beverley and York

One of the most tragic features in the history of these centuries is the decay in the economic life of the two towns within whose walls the industry of the Middle Ages had been fostered. It is impossible to fix a date at which the decadence began. The Black Death shook their prosperity for a time, but the rest of the county suffered equally. The Wars of the Roses brought misfortune on the towns, and by 1470 the competition from the West Riding had become severe. Hence, before the accession of Henry VII the decline was far advanced, and the complaints of the townsmen were frequent and serious. A similar development was taking place in many other towns which had built up a guild-controlled textile industry, and the history of York and Beverley excellently illustrates the interplay of economic, religious, and municipal influences on the textile trade.

York suffered heavily during the Wars of the Roses, when 'for their treuth unto ther Souverain Lord (Henry VI), such as abode in York was robbid, spolid, . . . and soo extremely empoverisherhed that few of them was ever after of power to defend themselves'.¹ The weavers of York at this time were in a sorry plight, for the drift away from the city seems to have been great. The yearly fee of £10 weighed heavily on those who remained, and in 1478 they were 'granted pardon', on account of their poverty, of half the annual contribution.² When

¹ Petition from the York City Council to Henry VII, 1485 (Davies, *Records of the City of York in the Fifteenth Century*, p. 291).

² Patent Rolls, 18 Ed. IV, pt. II, m. 12.

Henry VII came to the throne the poverty of the gild was again taken into consideration; the greater part of the fee farm was remitted, and the mayor made chief Serjeant-at-Arms to the King, with a salary to enable him to bear the expenses of his office.¹ At the same time the weavers were released for the time being from their annual payment, and allowed to have their 'gild, customs, and liberties without accompt in the same way as citizens in other cities do'. Their charter was renewed once more, with the proviso that all weavers without the city should be exempted from contributing anything to the gild coffers.² The reason for this extensive grant was specifically stated to be 'on account of the poverty and distress of the said weavers, which is so great that if they were compelled to pay the . . . farm, they would be obliged to remove from the city, and dwell elsewhere'.

These concessions appear to have had little effect in checking the decline which had already set in. Wolsey strove hard to bring back the vigour and energy of former days by obtaining Letters Patent which granted the city certain privileges in the exportation of northern wool and wool-fells. This favour allowed the cheaper wools of the northern parts of Yorkshire to be exported from York instead of Newcastle, as formerly.³ 'By reason therof the seid cityzens dyd dayly encesse in gettingyng of goods, as long as they contynued suche Shyppynge, the whych graunte so opteyned . . . was the hyghest and most especyall comodytye and Jewell that ever came to the foreseid Citye for the p'farrement and enrychyng of the Cytizens therof, and also great refresshyng to all the Cuntrey abowte the same.'⁴ The great 'Jewell' did not, however, spread its radiance upon the clothiers of the county, who soon complained that they could get no wool, because of the vigour with which the city merchants were exporting the raw material. The protests of York were disregarded, and an Act, passed in the same year as

¹ *Materials for a History of Henry VII* (Rolls Series), i. 462.

² *Ibid.*

³ By the Act 3 Ed. IV, c. 1, the export of wool was forbidden except to Calais. But the fleeces of Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland, Richmondshire, and Northallertonshire might be exported from Newcastle to any part. By the Letters Patent given to York that city was given equal freedom to export.

⁴ Cottonian MSS. (Brit. Mus.), Titus B. i. f. 279, June 24, 1526.

Wolsey's downfall (1529), annulled the privilege, and deprived the river port of its licence to export.¹ Indeed, if we may believe the letter to Wolsey, the last state was infinitely worse than the first, for prior to the grant a considerable trade in lead had been carried on by the men of York. When the wool licence was issued, declared the mayor, 'We were so gladde therof that we did lytell regarde our old commoditye, in bying of leade. And at that tyme, the rich marchaunts of London gatt the treat of lead as we hadde before . . . and hath inhaunced yt to so hygh a pryce That we canne gett but lytell of yt';² and indeed the trade in lead was partly lost to the city.

York had fallen upon evil days, but it was not the only sufferer. The greatness of Beverley had already vanished, and much of its economic glory departed. The cloths for which it had been famed in the thirteenth century were now unknown, and Leland, writing in the reign of Henry VIII, remarked that 'there was much goode clothe makynge at Beverle, but that is now much decayed'. An Act of 1535³ declared that there were many houses in 'greate ruine and decaye, and specially in the pryncipalle and chief stretes there, in which . . . stretes, in tymes passid, have bene beautifull dwellyng howses . . . well inhabited, wherof at thys daye moche parte therof ys desolate and void groundys, with pittys, sellers, and vaultes lying open and uncoveryd, very perilous for people who go by in the night'. A later document⁴ (1599) spoke of the town as being 'very poore and greatlie depopulated, insomuche as there are in the same fower hundred tenements and dwelling houses utterly decay'd and uninhabited, besides so great a number of poore and needie people altogether unhable so to be ymployed anie waie to gett their own lyvinge (that) the towne is constrainyd for the reliefe of them yearly to disburse one hundreth and fyve pound, besides the chardge of brynging upp and keepinge of fower-score orphans at knyting, spynning, and other workes'. Similar complaints were made during the sixteenth century concerning Malton, Scarborough, Pontefract, Hull, and most of the older towns throughout the county.⁵

¹ 21 Hen. VIII, c. 17.

² Cottonian MSS., Titus B. i, f. 279.

³ 26 Hen. VIII, c. 1; Act concerning many towns, including Beverley.

⁴ Exemption from payment of all tenths and fifteenths; quoted in Foulson, *l. c.* p. 228.

⁵ See statutes 27 Hen. VIII, c. 1; 32 Hen. VIII, c. 18.

It would be futile to attempt to explain this decay of town life in the textile centres as being due to any one cause. Many forces were at work, and we must confine ourselves to the most powerful of these varied and far-reaching influences.¹

First came the burden of gild demands. Industry had arrived at that stage where greater freedom was essential to further growth, but the gilds, instead of realizing this necessity, clung more closely to their old privileges, and attempted to make themselves even more exclusive than before. Their ordinances were marked by greater insistence on conditions of membership and citizenship. The privileges of the craft must not be watered down by being distributed amongst too great a number, and at the same time the growth of a class of interlopers must be prevented. Hence town or gild restated with growing emphasis the conditions of labour and the gild monopoly over industrial life. The necessity for being a burgess was especially reiterated. In the past the craftsman who did not wish to become a burgess had paid various penalties, and these fines were now raised all round. The non-burgess weaver of Beverley had his payments increased in 1445, and again ten years later,² whilst in 1460 the municipal authorities declared, 'Every person of every craft of the town (Beverley) being a brother of the same crafts must be a burgess from this day forth'.³ The position of aliens was becoming more difficult and unpleasant. In some gilds only English-born youths could be taken into apprenticeship, and the charges for the admission of adult aliens into the fraternities were forced higher and higher.

Details of internal organization were also receiving the closest attention.⁴ The large number of closely allied occupations made demarcation disputes frequent and bitter. As the merchandizing organizations grew more powerful, the functions of the craftsmen were rigorously confined to manufacture. Between the making of cloth, clothes, and other articles composed of cloth, and the selling of these goods, there were at least six classes of

¹ For documents illustrating this matter, see Bland, Brown, and Tawney, *op. cit.*, pp. 270 et seq.

² Selden Soc., xiv, intro., p. li.

³ *Beverley Town Documents (Hist. MSS. Comm.)*, p. 46.

⁴ In 1493 the Beverley authorities declared that no man should take up any occupation, except that of which 'he is brother withall, and in clothing', i.e. in livery (Selden Soc., xiv, 60).

men—textile workers, tailors, glovers, drapers, mercers, and merchants—and the growing jealousy with which each class guarded its sphere of control can be seen throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In 1561, for instance, it was decreed that 'No tailor, walker, or dyer within this towne of Beverley . . . shall bye no maner of wullen clothe or clothes to th'intent to selle againe by holesaile or retaile, by yards or otherwyse, under payne for every peace . . . to forfeitt xx^s to the drapers of the town'.¹ Specialization was pushed to extreme lengths, a development which was sure to fetter the growth of the industry as a whole.

The textile gilds began to suffer from over-legislation, either from the multiplication of their ordinances or from decrees and statutes issued by the municipality or the State. Both the manufacture and sale of cloth were subjected to increasingly minute regulation, and the liberty of the producer was more than ever curtailed. The weights and dimensions of cloths were fixed, and all pieces had to be sealed before exposure for sale.² In 1561 the coverlet weavers of York were forbidden to use more than one loom,³ and were warned against using certain kinds of yarn. The number of prohibitions grew apace, and so numerous did the by-laws of the weavers' fraternity become that an early seventeenth-century set of ordinances contained over 70 clauses.⁴ In the marketing of wares all manner of stipulations were laid down, special attention being given to the stranger and the alien. Here, as elsewhere, the gildsmen were unable to abandon their parochial outlook for one which would be national in its scope. The men of Kendal and other parts of England were still regarded as being little better than the alien.

The urban industry was over-regulated; it was also over-burdened with financial demands. The gild levies⁵ and exactions alone were heavy; at York the fee-farm was a perpetual nightmare to the weavers, who, as the York municipal records declare (1561), 'beyng overchardged with the said yearly pay-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

² *Ibid.*, xx, f. 53 b.

³ *York Minute Books*, ix, f. 31 a (21 F. . VII).

⁴ *Ordinances of Weavers' Company* (1607 and 1629) in *Gildhall, York*.

⁵ In 1418 the entrance fee for the weavers' gild of Beverley was increased from 2s. to 3s. 4d. (*Selden Soc.*, vol. xiv, p. li).

ment, have fled the most part forth of the said citie, inhabytyng in the country to the same nighe adjoynynge'.¹ Added to this was the load of municipal and national taxation. The former tended to increase, and the frequent calls for tenths and fifteenths were a severe strain on the resources of the townsmen.

The chief burdens of the gilds were therefore extreme exclusiveness, excessive regulation, and heavy taxation. These might have been borne with equanimity had town life guaranteed in return peace and security. But from 1381 onwards, for at least two centuries, the Yorkshire towns were torn with civic faction and strife. There were quarrels in the council, there was enmity between those within the government and those without. Disaffection often gave birth to disturbances, in which the gildsmen played a prominent part, and occasionally the control of the city passed for a time into the hands of the craftsmen. In 1493 the Governors of Beverley, formerly the Keepers, were compelled to be liverymen of the crafts, just as their predecessors had been elected from men nominated by the crafts.² In York the gilds enjoyed a short spell of power in municipal affairs, before they finally sank into insignificance in the sixteenth century. Here, after the Wars of the Roses, the members of the various trades were ordered by Edward IV to name two aldermen from whom the council would elect a mayor; and later they were commanded to gather together to choose a mayor from among the aldermen.³ These elections gave rise to great tumults, in which economics and local politics were intermingled, and the voteless journeymen expressed their opinion of their own conditions and of the general management of the city. Constant disturbances led to the charter of 1517, in which the control of York was placed in the hands of a mayor, sheriffs, aldermen, and a Common Council. This last body was composed of two members chosen from each of the thirteen principal crafts, and one from each of the fifteen smaller fraternities. These men, along with one searcher from each gild,

¹ York Minute Books, xxiii, f. 14 b, April 19, 1561.

² Selden Soc., vol. xiv, p. xxxv. See also *Beverley Corp. MSS. (Hist. MSS. Comm.)*, p. 54.

³ M. Sellers, 'York in the Sixteenth Century', *English Historical Review*, xvi, 270.

formed a council of nomination which chose annually three aldermen, one of whom was then elected mayor by the sheriffs and other aldermen. This constitution, with some later readjustments, continued throughout the century, but failed to remove the causes of decay and discontent. Mayor and council fulfilled the ceremonial part of their functions with great éclat. Reception, lavish displays of hospitality, the festivities of the Council of the North, venison feasts, and fish dinners made York proverbial for its good cheer. And all the time the commonalty watched its industry taking wings westward beyond Micklegate Bar. Anger smouldered long, burst into flames, and died away, having achieved very little.¹ Remonstrances were of no avail, and it was useless to appeal to the heads of the town, who were, as one vexed soul complained, 'more mete to drive pigges to the feylde than to be Justices of the Peace'.² There was evidently no hope of regeneration from the local authorities, who were themselves interested in the feast, the pageant, and the *ancien régime*.

Other causes contributed to the decay of town life in Yorkshire. Owing to some negligence the condition of the Ouse had become unsatisfactory and the stream was practically unnavigable. Steps were taken, however, in the early 'thirties of the sixteenth century for the removal of the weirs, shallows, &c., and the water-course was greatly improved.³ Beverley seems to have been injured by the migration of its merchants to Hull, this port being a much more convenient mercantile centre.⁴ The Reformation was not without its economic consequences. It affected town and country alike, and York and Beverley suffered considerably, since they were ecclesiastical as well as industrial centres. The dissolution of the 'Mynster of Beverley, whyche before the dissolution thereof was invested with great lands and possessions, whereby many religious persons, inhabitants and poore people of the saide towne have bene mayntayned and relieved' was given by contemporaries as one of the chief causes of the decay of that town.⁵ At York the dissolution

¹ *English Historical Review*, xvi. 296.

² *Ibid.*, p. 283.

³ *State Papers, Henry VIII*, vol. x, p. 243; and statute, 23 Hen. VIII, c. 18.

⁴ See Poulson, *Beverlac*, p. 338, in which Beverley mourns loss of staple.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 338-9.

of the monasteries and religious gilds, and the confiscation of such craft gild property as was held for religious purposes, meant a great overthrow of charitable and religious life. The monasteries had a firm hold upon the rural life of Yorkshire, and the gilds played an equally important part in urban life; hence the actions of Henry VIII and Protector Somerset tore up by the roots two very important growths. Part of the gild money was to be spent in keeping up three hospitals,¹ as places 'where the poore could be set on worke', but in spite of this provision there were large gaps in the charitable institutions of the city, as well as in its round of religious observance.

Faced with these handicaps, York and Beverley attempted to retain their places as cloth-making centres. Had there been no rival, free from such defects, ready to snatch away the industrial prosperity from the cities, the faults indicated above might not have had any serious effect on the welfare of the craftsmen. But the rival was there in the field at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and in the struggle which ensued during the next 150 years the circumstances were favourable in almost every respect to the West Riding clothiers. On the one hand was an industry burdened with financial levies, with all skilled enterprise and progress checked by the craft ordinances, industrial legislation, and the detailed system of inspection, with prices and costs of production comparatively high, and with local government in a state of almost constant chaos. On the other hand was an industry free as yet from strict regulation or heavy financial burdens, and with the cost of living and working expenses low. In such circumstances it was inevitable that the rural districts and small towns of the West Riding should triumph, and when the struggle really set in the old urban industries could offer no successful resistance. The whole situation is admirably described by a York writer, who was reporting on the state of trade in that city in 1561:

'The cause of the decay of the . . . weavers and loomes for woollen (cloth) within the sayd cite as I doe understand and

¹ Sellers, *English Historical Review*, xvi, 287. The Chantry Commissioners in their report on York stated that they found only twenty in place of thirty-six in the College of Vicars Choral, 'th' occasion whereof is by reason of decaye of landes and revenues of the Cytie of York, beyng sore in ruyn and decaye'. *Surtees Soc.*, vol. xci, pp. 25-6.

Wool is the lak of cloth makyng in the sayd cite as was in old tyme accustomed, whiche is nowe encreased and used in the townes of Halyfax, Leedes, and Wakefield, for that not only the comodytie of the water-mylnes is ther nigh at hande, but also the poore folke as speynners, carders, and other necessary work-folkes for the sayd webbyng, may ther besyde ther hand labor, have rye, fyre, and other releif good cheape, which is in this cite very deare and wantyng.¹

This vast economic change was not carried out without much strenuous opposition from those who were being injured thereby. The most famous instance of such resistance was the apparently successful attempt of the coverlet weavers of York to retain for themselves the monopoly of that branch of the textile manufacture. The weaving of coverlets for beds had long been an important branch of the York industry, but, although the weavers of the city claimed a monopoly of the trade, coverlet weavers were to be found in many places throughout the West Riding at the time of the Poll Tax Returns.² By the middle of the sixteenth century the competition of the outsider had grown so strong that it became necessary for the men of York to take steps in self-preservation. The most effective plan was to get the protection of Parliament, which would establish the citizens in the sole enjoyment of the manufacture. After considerable agitation the desired statute was obtained in the session of 1542-3.³ The Act so fully describes the whole situation that it is worthy of quotation at some length :

'WHEREAS the City of York, being one of the most ancient and greatest cities within the Realm of England, afore this time hath been maintained and upholden by divers and sundry handicrafts . . . and most principally by making and weaving of coverlets and coverings for beds, and thereby a great number of the inhabitants and poor people of the said city, suburbs thereof, and other places within the County of York have been duly set on work in spinning, carding, dyeing, weaving, and otherwise, to the great comodity of the inhabitants and poor people, . . . having thereby honest livings, and not made elsewhere in any part of the county. For the true, substantial and

¹ York Corporation Minute Books, xxiii, f. 20 a, June 8, 1561.

² Coverlet weavers are also referred to as chaloners and tapiters. From the figures given below it will be seen that they made small pieces about the size of the present-day quilt or sheet.

³ Statute 34-5 Hen. VIII, c. 10.

perfect making thereof, many good and beneficial ordinances and orders were devised and made, as well for the good quality . . . as concerning the length and breadth of them.¹ . . . And forasmuch as the same coverlets and coverings were well and substantially made and wrought, the King's subjects of divers parts of the realm and also strangers from foreign realms, knowing the goodness of them, were very desirous to have and buy them. . . . But now of late, divers and sundry evil-disposed persons, apprentices not expert in the same occupation, withdrawing themselves out of the said city of York into the county . . . and other places thereabouts, and also divers other persons inhabiting in villages and towns within the said county and nigh to the same, intermeddling with the craft and occupation, having little experience therein, not being bound to the said rules and ordinances, do daily make coverlets and coverings, neither of good stuffs nor of good assize, length or breadth, and for the utterance of the same use daily the craft and subtilty of hawking abroad in the country to villages and to men's houses, putting the same naughty ware to sale secretly, not only to the great impoverishing of the inhabitants of the said city and to the great deceit of the King's true and faithful subjects buying the . . . coverlets, to the great defaming and slandering of the said handicraft, but also to the utter decay of the same, if remedy the sooner herein be not provided.'

This statement of the grievance constituted the preamble of the Act. Stripped of its legal verbiage, it meant that the trade of the city weavers was being sapped by men who had always lived, or had recently gone to live, outside the walls and immediate neighbourhood of York. The mention of the ex-apprentice renegades indicates the occurrence of what is mentioned in other similar statutes, namely that 'weavers and workmen of clothiers, when they have been trained up in the trade of cloth-making and weaving three or four years, do forsake their masters, and do become clothiers and occupiers for themselves, without skill, stock, or knowledge, to the great slander of true cloth-making'.² In the hands of these upstarts, whose dignity did not scorn an occasional hawking of their produce, the fame of the Yorkshire coverlets was being dragged in the mire—at least, so said the men of York.

¹ Best coverlets were 3 yds. by 2½ yds.; second grade, 3 yds. by 2 yds. third quality, 2½ yds. by 1½ yds.

² Statute 4-5 Philip and Mary, c. 11.

For remedy against this outrage on law, order, and industrial honesty it was decreed by the statute that

'No manner of persons dwelling . . . within the said county of York or nigh unto the same, shall . . . make any coverlets or coverings, *to be put to sale*, unless such persons be inhabiting . . . within the city of York or within the suburbs of the same, upon pain of forfeiture of every coverlet wrought and put to sale. And it is further enacted that no manner of persons of the occupation of handicraftsmen of coverlets shall use the said craft of hawking or go as hawkers out of the city . . . but only in markets and open fairs.'¹

The enforcement of these clauses was placed in the hands of the officials of the craft of coverlet weavers, just as if it was an ordinary by-law issued by the fraternity.

The wardens and searchers were given full power to search all fairs and markets from the Trent northwards, and to confiscate all coverlets which contravened the conditions laid down in the Act. When they went into any 'liberties and franchises' other than their own, they might call upon the officials of those parts to assist in the search. A proviso declared that 'It shall be lawful for anyone to make coverlets as he shall please, for the use of his own household or for the lord to whom he is tenant, so always that the same coverlets shall not be put to sale'.

The coverlet weavers expected great results from this statute. The total cost of obtaining it amounted to about £1,000 in modern money, and of this sum the municipality paid one-half, as it considered that 'the same Acte is as much for the comon wele of the city as of the coverlet weavers of the same'.² It seems probable that the weavers' expectations were partly fulfilled, for a survey of the Yorkshire industry made in 1595 reported that no coverlets were made in any part of the county except York, and that this city produced 'two packs of cov'letts and carpetts each moneth, and ev'y packe containes 14 or 15 stone weight'.³ Evidently by this time York had become free from competition in the industry, a result probably due to the enforcement of the Act. But even if that were so the output was small and the industry quite insignificant.

¹ 34-5 Hen. VIII, c. 10.

² *York Memorandum Book*, vol. i, intro., p. xxxi.

³ Peck's 'Certificate of New Draperies in the County of York' (1595), *D. S. P., Eliz., cclii. 2*.

As we are dealing with the woes of the coverlet makers, it is amusing to note that the black sheep complained of in the statute were to be found within the fold as well as without. Six years after the passing of the above law one of the searchers of the fraternity was found selling coverlets unsealed; other weavers were summoned for keeping apprentices contrary to the ordinances, and about the same time one of the wardens, a man chosen to govern the craft and administer its decrees with honour and efficiency, was detected mixing 'hare and wolle together, and werkyng the same into coverlettes', for which offence he was fined forty shillings and deposed from his office.¹ Again, in 1555, the mayor was petitioned to add two new ordinances to the regulations of the trade, one making it unlawful to use certain devices in the making of coverlets, the other giving greater powers to the searchers.² The good name of York coverlets was evidently in jeopardy from the practices of those who fulfilled the conditions laid down in the Coverlet Act rather than from the outsiders against whom the statute was enacted.

Whilst men and industry sought the country districts and the smaller towns, Beverley and York continued their steady decline from former glories. Houses stood empty, streets were dirty and unkempt, and churches which once 'were good and honest livings for learned incumbents, by reason of the privy tithes of the rich merchants, and offerings of a great multitude', became so impoverished as to be 'not a competent and honest living for a good curate; yea, and no person will take the cure, but that of necessity there is some chantry priest, or some which for the most part are unlearned and very ignorant persons, not able to do any part of their duties, whereby the city is replenished with blind guides and pastors'.³ Statutory permission was granted to unite two or more churches into one parish, and a number of disused edifices were sold into private hands.⁴

The gilds continued on their downward track, halting at intervals to issue new ordinances which were as vigorous in

¹ York Corp. Minute Books, xviii. 75, 130 et seq.

² Ibid., xxi. 112 b-113.

³ Act 1 Ed. VI, c. 9, for closing various churches in York, and joining the endowments together.

⁴ York Corp. Minute Books, xix, ff. 16 and 46 (1550).

language as they were ineffective in action. In the distribution of 'voices' amongst the gild representatives for the York Common Council in 1517, the finishing and distributing fraternities took the most important places, the dyers being the only textile occupation in the list of greater crafts. Weavers and fullers came amongst the fifteen less important industries, and shearmen and the remaining textile branches were not represented at all. Some of these crafts were almost defunct by the middle of the sixteenth century, for in 1552 the people of York, petitioning for a reform in the craft representation on the Common Council, declared¹ that certain of the crafts which in 1517 were so important as to be able to claim one or two members on the Council were now 'decayd so that there is none of them to have voyces'.

For a number of the York crafts, however, death came more slowly. They lost that industrial supremacy which they had formerly possessed, but they contrived to maintain some kind of existence for two centuries longer. In some instances they gained strength by the union of two or three kindred crafts, as in the case of the haberdashers, feltmakers, and cappers, who were amalgamated in 1591 into 'one Companye and ffellowship', or of the tailors and drapers, who joined forces about 1560, with one set of ordinances and one team of searchers.² Then, being transformed, and sometimes supported by a royal charter, a number of these 'companies' survived beyond the seventeenth century.

The decline of the weavers from the commanding position which they held at the end of the fourteenth century can be clearly traced, and we possess some reliable information relating to the days of their decadence. The progress of the industry in the West Riding began to be specially marked in the first three-quarters of the fifteenth century, and that period synchronized with a serious decline in the output from the York looms. This we know from the Ulnage Accounts,³ which supply

¹ Sellers, *English Historical Review*, vol. xvi, p. 280; also *Victoria County History, Yorkshire*, vol. ii, p. 440.

² York Corp. Minute Books, ix, f. 25 a. In 1505 it was stated that there were only three persons in the whole drapers' craft. See also *ibid.*, xx, ff. 56 and 60. Also 14 Charles II, Add. MSS. (Brit. Mus.), vol. 8935; and Entry Book, Charles II, vol. v, p. 98.

³ For more detailed explanation of the nature of these ulnage documents, see the next section of this chapter.

us with figures of the number of saleable cloths made in York during the reigns of Richard II and Edward IV. Each account states the number of cloths made for sale, and the amount paid for subsidy and ulnage, fourpence being the subsidy paid on a whole cloth of assize. The first record is for 1394-5, and from September 23, 1394 to September 22, 1395 subsidy was paid in York on 3,200 cloths of assize and one scarlet cloth, the latter being charged sixpence, the former fourpence each. This meant a total subsidy of £53 7s. 2d.¹ Seventy years elapse before we again have the necessary figures, and in the meantime misfortune had overtaken the weavers of the county town. The account is for 1468-9,² and the period covered is only ten and a half months; but if we calculate it out to a twelve-months' basis, we find that the number of cloths for the whole year amounted to 1,809, and that the subsidy realized £30 3s. Thus, during those seventy years, the amount of cloth made in York had *decreased by nearly one-half*. The records of subsequent years make the decline even greater, as will be seen from the following statement:

Year.	Cloths.	Subsidy.		
		£	s.	d.
1394-5 . . .	3,200 cloths of assize and 1 scarlet cloth . . .	53	7	2
1468-9 . . .	1,809 cloths of assize . . .	30	3	0
1473-5 ³ } annual	1,173½ " " . . .	19	11	1
} average	" " . . .	15	7	5
1475-8 ⁴ " . . .	922½ " " . . .			

If one takes the annual average for the years 1473-8, it then appears that the output of cloth from the city of York had decreased by two-thirds during the preceding 80 years.

This diminution of output reacted on the fortunes of the weavers' gild, the membership of which declined throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. At the commencement of each new reign the weavers petitioned the Crown for relief from the burden of their £10 fee-farm, and were either excused

¹ Account, 18-19 Rich. II; Exch. Accounts, bundle 345, no. 16.

² Account, 8-9 Ed. IV, Exch. Accounts, bundle 346, no. 22.

³ Account, 13-15 Ed. IV (two whole years), Exch. Accounts, bundle 345, no. 24. This roll is for two whole years, so I have calculated the annual average.

⁴ Account, 15-18 Ed. IV, Exch. Accounts, bundle 345, no. 24. This account is for two and a half years and eighty-three days; the annual average has therefore been calculated for above.

from one-half, or exonerated entirely from payment by each of the Tudor monarchs.¹ So far gone was the craft that in 1517 it did not appear in the list of the thirteen most important trades, and the decline continued during the next half-century. In 1501 the City Council appealed on behalf of the weavers for relief from the fee-farm, and in the petition surveyed the rise and fall of the trade.

'Whereas in olde tymes past, the said citie hathe moche prospered in clothe makynge, and thereby th'occupacion of weavers of the same citie, beyng then bothe many and of goode substance, obteyned by charter of Your Highnes most noble pregenytours to be incorporat, veldyng for a fee fyrme or gylde a certayne yerely somme . . . which yerely fee fyrme was payed accordyngly so long as web-ynge in the said citie was used. But like as in processe of tyme the said occupieng decreased and at last utterly decayed in the citie, even so the weavers of the same, both wantyng their accustomed occupieng and also beyng overchardged with the same yerely payment, have fled the most part forth of the said citie, inhabtyng in the contry to the same nyghe adjoynyng, sauf onely a few very poore men now remaynyng, whoe no doubte if they shalbe compelled to paye still the said yerely fee fyrme, shall in short tyme be fayne alsoe clerely to forsake your Grace's citie.'

Elizabeth declined to cancel the payment, except for a sum of money to be paid at once, and the weavers, thanks to the loan made them by the municipality, were able to relieve themselves of the yearly burden.²

Thirteen years before this happened the weavers of woollen cloth had taken a step such as most crafts were taking about this time. Their fraternity now numbered probably about fifteen members, and for purposes of economy had long been working in co-operation with the linen weavers, who were a craft of about the same size.³ This co-operation rapidly grew stronger. In 1548 the two crafts were jointly bearing financial burdens, and almost immediately afterwards it was decreed that 'from henceforth for dyvers concyderacons th'occupacon of wollen wevers and lynon wevers shall be all one occupacon and to bere equal charges in all thynges, and to have serche togydder as all

¹ See, for instance, *Calendar of State Papers, Hen. VIII* (1511), vol. i, no. 1020.

² York Corp. Minute Books, xxiii, ff. 29 and 49.

³ As, for instance, in 9 Hen. VII, York Corp. Minute Books, vii, f. 107 a.

one, and the said lyn wevers to be yerely at the eleccion of the master of the wevers, and to be ordered like unto them in every condicon'.¹

This alliance resulted in the Weavers' Company of York, a company in which the linen weavers generally predominated throughout the next two centuries; for this body existed until at least 1796, and possibly for a year or two longer. In the Muniments Room at York can be seen some seventeenth-century ordinances of the company, as well as the Account Books for the years 1564 to 1796. The ordinances of 1607 and 1629 are most elaborate, and show to what lengths of detailed supervision the craft regulations had gone. There are over 70 clauses dealing, *inter alia*, with the elections of the executive, foreigners, hawking, apprenticeship, the behaviour of journeymen, the employment of women, the frequenting of taverns during divine service, and the practice of smoking tobacco in the meetings of the company.

The Account Books indicate the number of members in the society, and provide us with the data for a rough comparison of the numbers in the industry at different periods. The weavers' ordinances of 1400 are prefaced by the names of 50 members of the crafts, and others are referred to; therefore the membership of the fraternity of woollen weavers in 1400 was *at least fifty*. In 1590 the company of linen and woollen weavers contained only about 20 members; of these nearly half were linen weavers, and so the number of master woollen weavers could not have been more than a dozen—a strange contrast to the 50 masters of two centuries before.

Up to the time of the Civil War the company made some small progress, and increased its membership. This increase, however, was almost entirely due to the linen-weaving section, which did succeed in making a little headway. The membership of 20 in 1590 had risen to 27 by 1626, and to 36 in 1632.² In 1628 the weavers petitioned for a renewal of their charter, with certain additions of a strongly monopolistic character. The renewal was granted, but without the desired additions.³

¹ York Corp. Minute Books, xix, ff. 50 and 53.

² These figures are obtained by adding together the names of those who paid their annual subscription with those who are recorded as being in arrears.

³ D. S. P., Chas. I, cix. 58 (July 9, 1628).

and the company prospered until the outbreak of the Civil War. Then, in the chaos of the next 20 years, it fell to pieces. In 1663 there were only 7 brethren; at times during the following years the number rose to about 10, and this small handful of men kept the company alive in name until the end of the eighteenth century. The annual meetings, however, were very formal. There were no accounts to audit, for the annual subscriptions had disappeared, and the only business consisted of the approval of a new apprentice or journeyman. The meetings were monotonous in their similarity and formality, and it seemed possible that the company might continue indefinitely. Suddenly the Account Book presents a blank page after the entries of 1796. The last meeting had been held, the last officers appointed, the last apprentice approved. Then came the end; how, when, or why we do not know.

This story of the York weavers is typical of the manner in which the survivals clung to their shadowy privileges and organization. The economic forms of the Middle Ages were slow in passing away, and the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are littered with the remains of mediaeval institutions. In York the insistence upon the freedom of the city as a *sine qua non* for trading was retained up to the end of the eighteenth century, and a certain Rev. W. MacRitchie, passing through York in 1795, remarked that the city 'has but little trade, because no man can set up in business here without purchasing the Freedom of the City, which is an expensive matter, and to beginners almost, if not altogether, unattainable'.¹ At Hull most elaborate weavers' ordinances were issued in 1673, and, as Lambert says, the members of the gild 'met yearly, elected their Warden and their Searchers, ordered their dinner, and displayed their plate, until at length the dinner was deserted, the silver tobacco pipe unlit, and the punch bowl cold'.² Then, either in silent discontinuance, or in a last act of formal suicide, the few remaining adherents dissolved the brotherhood which had run through so many centuries.

For some years this industrial decline brought York into a condition of depression. Eventually the city regained part of

¹ *Antiquary*, November 1896, p. 332, quoted by editor of *York Freeman's* *News* (Surtees Soc., vol. xcvi), p. xv.

² Lambert, *Two Thousand Years of Gild Life*, pp. 208 et seq.

its former activity, when the export trade of the Merchant Adventurers had developed to considerable proportions, and the cloths of the West Riding passed through York on their way to Europe. In this day the loss of industry was counteracted by the increased commercial activity. But in the meantime there was a period of dire poverty and distress. Unemployment was rife, and the poorer classes of the city were in great straits. The destruction of the monasteries and religious guilds had wiped out the chief philanthropic agencies, and the various private charities were inadequate for supplying relief to the poor. The problem of poverty became very pressing about the middle of the sixteenth century, and at last, following the example of other towns, the authorities of York began to grapple with the question of unemployment. They apparently admitted the principle of the 'right to work', and attempted to remove the poverty in their midst by providing work for those who were able to do it. Hence, from 1569 onwards for over a century, York was engaged spasmodically in municipal manufacture.

The first scheme was inaugurated in 1569, with Roger Lighe, a clothier by trade, in charge of the venture. The city purchased stocks of wool and textile apparatus, which were established in St. George's House. The constables of the various wards were ordered to gather together the poor in their constituencies, and bring them to the House, where they might be given work. Those who were acquainted with the methods of cloth manufacture were to pursue that occupation, being paid wages according to a piece-rate, and as to the inexperienced, Lighe was 'to do his diligens to instruct such of the sayd poore as he shall perceyve not perfect, to th'intent that lyttle by lyttle there may be of the sayd poore sufficient to serve the turne'.¹ The scheme was floated with a fair measure of success. Shears and other implements were purchased, men were sent into Lincolnshire to procure supplies of wool, and the weavers were soon so busy that the spinners could not keep pace with the demand for yarn. The municipal fabrics were exposed for sale in the City Hall on Ouse Bridge, and were generally purchased by the merchants of the city.²

¹ York Corp. Minute Books, xxiv, f. 138 b (May 18, 1569).

² Ibid., ff. 138-92 (1569-70).

The establishment of this textile scheme did not, however, solve the problem of poverty in York. The cloths were often of inferior quality and of higher price than those which the merchants could obtain from private makers, and thus the new venture finally collapsed, leaving the morass of unemployment undrained.

New or similar schemes were therefore being constantly hatched to provide for the poor by the introduction of new industries. In 1590 a knitting school was instituted,¹ and so many children attended it that the services of three teachers were required. Seven years later the corporation made a contract with Thomas Lewkener, a Hartlepool gentleman, who undertook to begin the 'practice of the art, misterye, or occupation of making of fustians',² and thus provide regular employment for at least 50 persons of the poorer sort. Lewkener was given the freedom of the city, granted the monopoly of fustian-making within the city for the space of ten years, provided with a house free of rent, and a loan of money. Armed with such powers and privileges he made onslaught upon the destitution in York, but only succeeded in denting the surface of that problem.

Throughout the seventeenth century the city authorities persisted in their efforts. Still more new industries were introduced, the chief being the manufacture of worsted cloth. As yet Yorkshire made scarcely any worsted goods, confining its attention to the old-fashioned woollens. But Norwich and various other places in East Anglia had built up a great trade in worsteds, or 'Norwich stuffs'. The success of these towns suggested to the aldermen of York the possibility of restoring the industrial prosperity of York by introducing the trade which had made Norwich so prosperous; in this manufacture at least they would be free from the competition of the West Riding. In 1610, therefore, they induced Edward Whalley, a citizen of Norwich, to take up his abode in York, and there to make worsteds, employing as many poor people as he possibly could. He was granted all the customary privileges, a house in which to work, a loan of money, and his freedom gratis. The

¹ *Victoria County History, Yorkshire*, iii. 468 et seq.

² *York Corp. Minute Books*, xxxi, f. 301 (1597). For much of this information I am indebted to Miss Sellers, either directly or through her article in the *Victoria County History*.

scheme was a failure, and in 1620, £280 having been expended with little apparent result, the council decided that 'to erect a new manual occupation in the city of making Norwiche stuffes would be too burdensome to this citty'.¹ The worsted project was therefore abandoned for the time being, but was revived in the 'thirties, with a certain amount of temporary success. A building known as the 'House of Workes' was fitted up with worsted-making utensils,² and many poor householders were set to work under the charge of a master, who was paid £20 per annum for his supervision and tuition. Alongside this work the council had introduced the making of Kendal cloths, and had provided cards and spinning-wheels for all the hospitals, in order that the supply of yarn might be sufficient.³

After the Civil War similar efforts were made to coax industries to York. In 1655 the corporation signed an agreement with two brothers, Chapman by name, who lived at Thornover, some distance from York. By the contract⁴ it was agreed that the two men, clothiers by trade,

'shall . . . leave their habitations where they now dwell and become Inhabitants and dwellers within the said City or Suburbs thereof, to witt the House called comonly the Jersey House, and accept their freedoms, and shall bring with them their families and workefolkes and all their Loomes and materialls belonging to their trade, to the house or place . . . which is intended for their entertainment. They shall imploy their owne stocks and such other moneys as are by these presents intended to be given or lent to them . . . wholly for setting the poore people of the Citty on worke, in spinning, carding and other Labours concerning the said trade, and shall duely pay unto them for carding and spinning of fine wool for every six pounds averdupois weight sixteen pence, and of course wool twelve pence for every six pounds, . . . and they are to sett up and continue four Loomes betweene them at the least, and to make two clothes weekly at the least, if there be vent and carding and spinning to be gott in the Citty.'

The clothiers were to continue in the trade for at least seven years, and during that time they were 'to bring or procure

¹ York Corp. Minute Books, xxxiv, ff. 177-8.

² *Victoria County History, Yorkshire*, iii. 471.

³ York Corp. Minute Books, xxxv, f. 248.

⁴ See Articles of Agreement between Mayor and Comonalty and Thomas and Michael Chapman, both of Thornover, in the County of York, Clothiers. April 30, 1655; in Muniments Room, York Guildhall.

Instructors to teach the poore to spin and card and doe other Labours belonging to the said Trade . . . at their own Charge, and the Citty not to be att any charge' for instruction.

In return for these services the corporation undertook to give the men their freedom, presented them with a sum of £50, and lent them £100 each, free of interest, for seven years. Further, they were provided with Jersey House and some adjoining land at a nominal rent, and the corporation promised to 'find' soe many spinning wheels and wool-cards as shall be thought necessary for the first yeare'.

The Chapman brothers took up their abode in York, and set to work, in accordance with the terms of the contract. But they also failed to effect a revival in the industrial fortunes of the city. Failure attended the efforts of their successors, of whom there were many. Again and again, throughout the rest of the century, clothiers, either of woollen or worsted fabries, were engaged by the city authorities to take up the task of employing the poor.¹ Their work was small, and entirely insignificant in comparison with that which was being done in the Leeds, Wakefield, and Halifax districts and in comparison with the amount of cloth produced on the looms of York three centuries before. These municipal efforts were little more than expedients for the employment of the numerous poor who were

The last effort of the York Corporation which has come to my notice is dated 1608. Richard Snowe of Masham, sergemaker, was invited on the usual conditions to come and supervise the textile work of the poor. The preamble to the indenture is very interesting, and worthy of a little quotation: 'WHEREAS it is very observable that the number of the poore within this Citty dothe increase daily more and more, for want of employment and of a publick manufacture whereupon to sett them to worke, and therefore the Poore are not onely become very burdensome and chargeable to the . . . parishes where they live, but many of them for want of Employment under the cōdition of their Poverty do turn Vagabonds and idle wandring Beggars, and take and pursue evil courses of Life and Conv'sacon, to the utter Ruin and destruction of themselves, the great Scandall of the Citty and the evill Example to others. AND WHEREAS for the prevention of such mischeates and Inconveniences as may in all probabality happen . . . by such Encrease of the poore, hath been considered that some publick Manufacture should be sett up and carried on within the . . . Citty of Yorke, whereby the said poore or such of them as are able to worke may be kept in a constant employment and thereby rendered in a great measure capable to maintain themselves.' Snowe was to employ no more than four non-pauper persons, and was to pay wages according to the best and greatest Rates that are or may be for the time being lawfully allowed, or paid, in any other places within this Kingdom'. This manufactory is in the Muniments Room at York: it is impossible to give the reference number for it until the detailed catalogue of York MSS. is accessible.

on the hands of the authorities, and no industry could achieve a great success when it was practically limited to a pauper labour force. Hence these efforts to reinvigorate an almost extinct manufacture were puny, fitful, and entirely ineffective. The merchants of York did not look to Lighe, Whalley, and the Chapman brothers for their supplies of cloth for the export trade; instead they went westward to the new home of the industry, to the area which is still to-day devoted to the same occupation. How and when the manufacture of cloth assumed large proportions in this district we must now consider.

(b) The Expansion of the Woollen Industry in the West Riding

The Poll Tax Returns revealed the existence of the textile industry in almost every part of Yorkshire, though more vigorous in some areas than others. In the central plain of the county there were more names attached to the industry than were to be found further westward, and in the Halifax and Bradford areas cloth-making did not appear as an important means of livelihood. The cloths produced in these parts were made largely for home consumption, and it is doubtful whether any considerable number of fabrics found their way into the English or foreign markets. It now remains for us to trace the progress of the industry in that district which we regard to-day as its home, i. e. the part of Yorkshire which lies south and west of Leeds. Over this area there was in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries a very rapid expansion, which brought the industry into a position of rivalry with East Anglia and the West of England long before the eighteenth century.

For this part of our story we have statistical evidence of an accurate character. The Ulnager's Accounts,¹ though distributed irregularly over the period 1394 to 1478, give valuable figures of comparison as to the progress in various places. It

¹ These Accounts are in the Public Record Office amongst the Exchequer MSS. They were first examined by Mr. J. Lister, of Shibden Hall, Halifax, who very kindly lent the present writer the transcripts which he had made of some of the Accounts. Mr. Lister's examination was not, however, exhaustive; further, he confined his attention almost entirely to Yorkshire. Miss M. Sellers went over the same ground in preparing her article on 'The Textile Industries' for the *Victoria County History*, but owing to inaccurate cataloguing omitted to notice at least one important document. The present writer has collected the figures from the Accounts for the whole country.

must be remembered, however, that only cloths made for sale passed through the hands of the ulnager. The pieces woven for home use would not be subjected to his scrutiny, and hence the ulnage figures apply solely to the cloths which were intended for the market.

The earliest returns for Yorkshire are for the years 1395-6. Mr. Lister points out the reason for this. By the Ulnage Statute of 1353 only those cloths which were equal to at least half a cloth of assize were liable to be called upon to pay subsidy. The cloth of assize measured 26 yards by $6\frac{1}{2}$ quarters (i. e. 1 yard, 1 foot, $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches).¹ The great majority of cloths made in the country districts of Yorkshire were narrow cloths, 'streit' cloths, kerseys, &c., which rarely exceeded 12 yards, and therefore escaped the payment of subsidy and the supervision of the ulnager. In 1393-4, however, a change in the policy of cloth regulation broke down this evasion. A law passed during that session² declared that any weaver might 'make and put to sale cloths, as well kerseys as others, of such length and breadth as him shall please, paying the subsidy, ulnage, and other duties, of every piece of cloth after the rate of the assize of cloth mentioned in the statute of Edward III', i. e. in proportion to the size of the piece. This Act made the smaller pieces liable to payment of subsidy, and the Yorkshireman now had to contribute his quota for the kerseys and 'panni stricti'. As the subsidy on a cloth of assize was fourpence, and as a kersey equalled about one quarter of a standard cloth, the levy on these shorter and narrower pieces was settled at one penny, and remained at that figure as long as the ulnage system existed.

The first *computus* or account for the whole county covers the 15½ months from July 20, 1395, to November 4, 1396.³ The return excludes the city of York, which had its own account, and paid the amounts already stated in the preceding section of this chapter. The names of the county cloth-makers, numbering

¹ Statute 27 Ed. III, i, c. 4. See J. Lister, 'Notes on early History of the Woollen Trade in Bradford and Halifax', *Bradford Antiquary*, II, 33-5.

² Rich. II, c. 2.

³ Particulars of the Account of Wm. Skipwith, collector of ulnage and duty of saleable cloths, and of the forfeitures of the same, in the County of York, the City of York excepted, to wit, from the 20th day of July in the 15th year to the 4th day of November in the 16th year of Richard II (Exch. & R. Accounts, bundle 345, no. 15).

357, are drawn from all parts of the shire. The local grouping of the contributors is vague, and the only possible classification is under marginal headings, which give the following approximate distribution :

	<i>Amount of subsidy.</i>		
	£	s.	d.
Ripon and Boroughbridge (grouped together)	7	5	0
Richmond, Bedale, and Allerton (grouped together)	5	10	0
Wakefield, Leeds, and Doncaster (grouped together)	4	5	0
Pontefract, Howden, and Selby (grouped together)	3	9	0
Malton (standing alone)	0	10	0

The figures placed against these groups give approximately the amount of subsidy paid in each area, but as the districts are so vaguely defined the returns only serve to show that the most active areas were around Ripon or in the centre of the county. The cloths were divided into two classes :

(a) 'Panni stricti', or narrow cloths, of which there were 221 pieces. Each of these was reckoned as being equal to one quarter of a cloth of assize, and therefore paid one penny, producing in all 18s. 5d.

(b) Cloths of assize, which amounted to 1,202 whole pieces and 9 yards. On these the subsidy, at fourpence per cloth, amounted to £20 os. 10d. Thus the total subsidy for the Riding equalled £20 19s. 3d. for 1,257 $\frac{3}{4}$ cloths. These figures are for 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ months, but, reducing them to a twelve months' basis, the returns for one year are as follows :

Number of cloths	974
Subsidy	£16 4s. 8d.

The account ends with a list of the offences committed against the ulnag regulations. No cloth was to be exposed for sale until it had been examined and sealed and the dues paid ; the penalty for infringement of this rule was forfeiture of the cloth, and one or two men were punished in this year for a violation of the law.

The next account, from November 4, 1396, to November 20, 1397 (i. e. 54 weeks), is much more illuminating, for now the West Riding had been placed under the supervision of William Barker of Tadcaster,¹ whose duty it was to gather in the revenue

¹ Account of Wm. Barker for year November 1396 to November 1397 (Exch. K.R. Accounts, bundle 345. no. 17)

from this Riding alone. Hence the details are much more copious, and local classification is more accurate. The rivalry for first place in the quantity of cloth produced lies between Wakefield and Ripon. Seven names appear under the heading of Wakefield as paying subsidy for 173½ cloths of assize. At Ripon nine men are named as being responsible for the production of 168½ cloths; thus Wakefield has more cloths to its credit, and pays a greater contribution to the Exchequer, than Ripon.

But this triumph is heavily discounted when we consider the extent of country covered by the term 'Wakefield'.¹ The only other town named in this area is Leeds, which had four men accounting for 120 cloths. This meant therefore that the two headings of Leeds and Wakefield included the whole district containing Bradford, Halifax, and Huddersfield; in fact, the whole of the county to-day engaged in the manufacture of woollen cloth. Under such circumstances it was only natural that Wakefield and Leeds should make a brave show against their more northerly rival.

The other centres mentioned are responsible for much smaller quantities of cloth, and the whole list reads as follows:

	<i>Names.</i>	<i>Cloths.</i>	<i>Subsidy.</i>
Wakefield	7	173½	57/10
Ripon	10	168½ & 8 yds.	56/3½
Leeds	4	120	40/-
Poultfret	14	105½	35/3
Wetherby	6	35½	11/10
Doncastre	9	27	9/-
Barnsley	6	26 & 6 yds.	8/9
Selby	4	22½	7/6
Skipton	6	21 & 7 yds.	7/1½
Rodirham	5	18	6/-

The total number of whole cloths on which payments were made was thus 718½ plus 3 yards made by 71 master weavers, and the total subsidy £11 19s. 6¾d.

In the following year we have an account for November 20, 1397, to November 21, 1398,² which shows a great decline in the quantity of cloth produced and the amount of subsidy paid.

¹ Wakefield and Leeds eventually split up into Halifax, Bradford, Almondbury, and Leeds. See later accounts.

² Exch. K.R. Accounts, bundle 345, no. 18.

Only 474 whole cloths were accounted for, paying a subsidy of £7 18s. In these last two accounts we have returns stretching from November 4, 1396, to November 21, 1398, a period of just over two years. During that time subsidy was paid on 1,192½ cloths, or an average annual output for the West Riding of approximately 590 whole cloths of assize. Not by any means a large quantity, but yet one must remember that there was much manufacture for home consumption, and also that a whole cloth of assize might, and did often, mean two or four smaller pieces. Further, this average is admittedly unsatisfactory, since it is based on a calculation from two years, in which the output differed very considerably. But we have no other figures from which it is possible to obtain a more accurate estimate, and so we must be content with the facts as we have them, surmising in the light of the 1396-7 figures that 590 cloths is probably somewhat below the usual annual output.

In these early accounts we find mention of a surprising variety of cloths and colours. There were 'panni stricti', 'panni de blankett', 'panni de Cagsall' (Coggeshall), russets, 'Panni blodii' (blue), greens, 'blewe melde', &c. Scarlet cloths were scarcely produced at all in the county, this manufacture being left to other parts of England. Thus, although the cloths were coarse and the processes were probably primitive, there was a certain amount of variety in the products of the West Riding looms.

From 1398 onwards until 1468 there is an unbroken absence of ulnage accounts for the county. This is probably due to the fact that the ulnage was 'farmed out' to some person, who paid a fixed annual sum to the Exchequer and then appropriated to himself the whole of the contributions, realizing profit or loss according to the progress or stagnation of the industry. What was happening during that period of transition we would give much to know, and the next list of ulnage returns raises so many questions that the lack of accounts is doubly disappointing. Still, in spite of the absence of financial records, one can easily see from local documents that the textile industry of the West Riding was becoming more and more important, and that weavers, dyers, fullers, and other cloth-workers, or dealers, were developing the industry all through the period of Yorkist

and Lancastrian strife.¹ The absence of the names of Bradford and Halifax from the early ulnager lists may possibly indicate that the industry in those places was not of great dimensions in the reign of Richard II; or it may be due to the fact that the deputies appointed by the ulnager to collect the money throughout the Riding had their head-quarters at Wakefield and Leeds, and therefore grouped all the contributions under the names of these two towns instead of giving Bradford and Halifax credit for the cloths which were produced there. Whatever the reason, there must have been great progress during the first half of the fifteenth century in order to explain the situation revealed in the returns for 1468. In 1439 Halifax had its liver, fuller, glover, and drapers, and in 1467 eight men of Halifax were engaged in the work of fulling cloth. From lack of data it is dangerous to attempt any explanation of this progress. It may have been due to a migration from the city, or merely an acceleration in the rate of progress amongst the natives of the western parts of the Riding, who were favoured by the lower cost of production and the general facilities which these districts enjoyed.

It is indeed a great transformation which meets the eye in the next ulnager's statement. The account is for the period November 12, 1468, to Michaelmas, 1469, i. e. 46 weeks, and for the whole county, including York, Hull, Doncaster,² &c. The form and contents are so interesting that it may be well to quote a little of it in translation:

County of York. Particulars of the Account of Thomas Trygot, Approver of the Subsidy and Ulnage of Saleable Cloths in the County of York . . . from the xijth day of November in the viiith year of the reign of our Lord King Edward IV. to the Feast of Saint Michael next following, that is to say, for three quarters of a year and xlvijj days.

City of York. Of John Clasyn, Christopher Marshall and other men of the City of York, for 1,596 cloths sealed in the foresaid City during the aforesaid period

Subsidy, xxvjth xij^d
Ulnage, lxxvjth vij^d

¹ See H. Ling Roth, *Yorkshire Coiners*, article by Mr. Lister on 'The Making of Halifax'.

² Exch. Accounts, bundle 346, no. 22. This account has been incorrectly catalogued, and was therefore overlooked by both Mr. Lister and Miss Sellers.

Of Thomas Pykburn, Christopher frickley, and other men of the town of Doncaster, for 35 saleable cloths, and a half, sealed there	Subsidy, xj ^s x ^d Ulnage, xvij ^d .
Of Richard Symmes, John Brokhole, and other men of Barnsley, for 88 sale- able cloths and three quarters sealed there	Subsidy, xxix ^s vij ^d Ulnage, iij ^s viij ^d ob.
Of Miles Parker, Richard Mason, and other men of Wakefield, for 231 saleable cloths sealed there	Subsidy, lxxvij ^s Ulnage, ix ^s vij ^d ob.

And so on ; the entries, arranged in order of magnitude, are as follows :

	<i>Cloths.</i>
York	1,596
Ripon	888
Halifax	853
Wakefield	231
Leeds	176 ¹
Almondbury	160
Hull	148
Pontefract	106
Barnsley	88 ¹
Bradford	88 ¹
Doncaster	35 ¹
Selby	26 ¹
Total	4,398
Subsidy and Ulnage	£82 10s. 0 ¹ d.

Thus the output for the whole county for 46 weeks equalled 4,398 cloths ; this for a whole year would amount to 4,972 cloths. Of these, 1,972 pieces were accounted for by York and Hull ; the figures for Beverley are presumably included in those for Hull, and cannot have been at all important. The West Riding can therefore claim 3,000 cloths. The year for which these figures are quoted seems to have been a ' boom ' year, and there was a diminution in the output during the subsequent period. According to the accounts, subsidy was paid for the West Riding as follows :

<i>Year.</i>	<i>No. of cloths for West Riding.</i>
1409-70	2,586
1471-3	1,894 (average over 2 ¹ / ₂ years)
1473-5	2,188 (average over 2 years)
1475-8	1,780 (average over 2 ¹ / ₂ years) ¹

¹ Exch. K.R., bundle 345, no. 24.

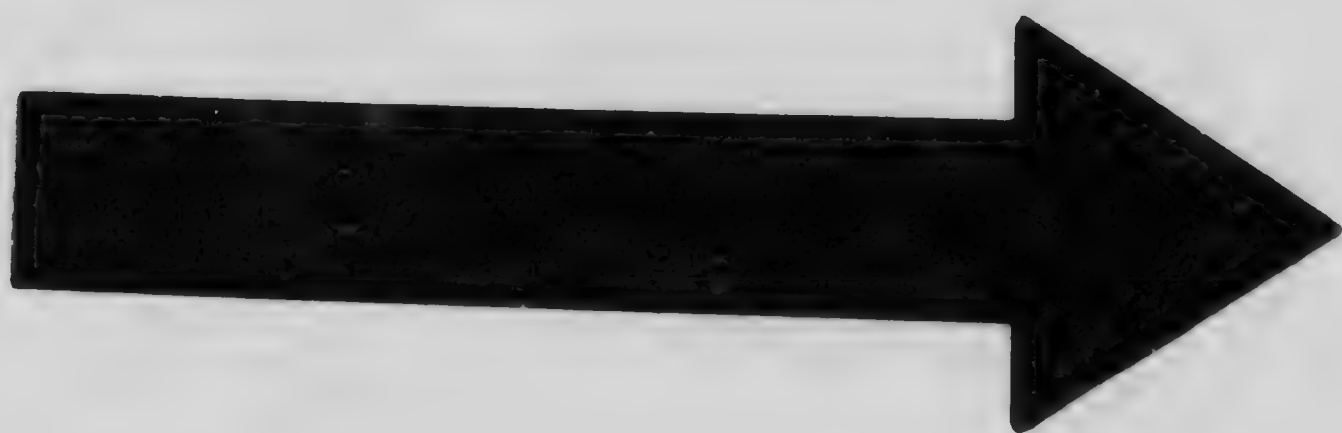
Therefore, taking the annual average production over the whole of this period, 1468-78, we get an output of 2,128 cloths. Compare this with the average output for 1396-8, viz. 590 cloths, and we see an increase of nearly 300 per cent., made largely at the expense of the county capital.

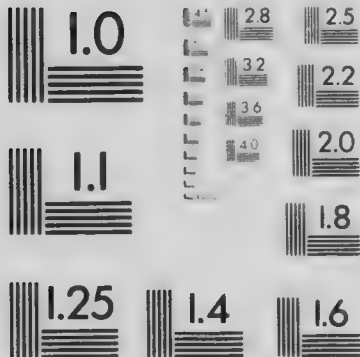
These later ulnage returns are valuable for the evidence which they afford about the comparative importance of the various districts engaged in the production of cloth. Let us first present the figures, and then point out the significant developments which they indicate.

1438-9 (46 weeks).		1471-3 (2½ years).		1473-5 (2 years).	
	Cloths.		Cloths.		Cloths.
York	1,596	York		York	2,346½
Ripon	888	Ripon	1,897	Halifax	1,493½
Halifax	853	Halifax	1,518½	Ripon	1,386½
Wakefield	231	Leeds	355½	Almondbury	427
Leeds	176½	Almondbury	320	Hull	420½
Almondbury	160	Hull	295	Leeds	320
Hull	148	Barnsley	177½	Pomfret	214½
Pontefract	106	Wakefield	161	Bradford	178½
Barnsley	88½	Bradford	125½	Wakefield	160
Bradford	88½	Pomfret	108½	Barnsley	142½
Doncaster	35½	Doncaster	44½	Doncaster	35½
Selby	26½	Selby	26½	Selby	10

From these data we see that York still retained the leading position, although her supremacy had been much impaired, and the next hundred years were to witness a further decline in her output. In 1468 Ripon came second, but her position also was threatened by the growth of a rival. That rival was Halifax, a town not mentioned in the accounts of Richard II's reign, but now taking third place on the list. Beside these three centres, the rest were insignificant. Almondbury, representing the Huddersfield area, appeared next to Leeds, but Bradford made its entry in very humble fashion. The number of recorded places lying south-west of Leeds is large, and the output from this area equalled that of York itself.

In the list for 1471-3 Halifax still had to be content with the third place; Leeds and Almondbury passed Wakefield, and Bradford crept up one place. Finally in the third list, for 1473-5, Halifax outstripped its more northerly rival, and assumed second place; Almondbury and Hull overtopped Leeds, whilst Bradford advanced to the eighth place. These positions remained the





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same in the returns for the following years, 1475-8, when the accounts come to an end.

The outstanding feature of these statistics is the 'triumph of the Halifax clothiers. From a position so humble as not to merit the inclusion of its name in the early accounts, Halifax had risen to a position of supremacy in the western industry, and outdistanced all but York itself. Whilst noting this success, we must remember that the size of the parish of Halifax, for which these returns really are, was very great, embracing a wide area of hilly country. Much of it had been entered in the fourteenth-century accounts under the names of Leeds and Wakefield, and so had helped to swell the total from these places, whilst leaving the real home of the pieces without recognition. Still, even admitting that the figures are not so wonderful as they would appear at first sight, it remains beyond dispute that over the area lying round Halifax there was a marked quickening of industrial life during the fifteenth century. Nor was the progress stayed during subsequent years. Halifax wares became known throughout the country. They were sold at the cloth fairs at St. Bartholomew¹ and the market in Blackwell Hall, London; the stock-in-trade of a York tailor in 1485 contained lengths 'de pannis laneis Halyfax et Crawyn', and many other cloths from the West of Yorkshire, including 'Halyfax tawny', 'Halyfax grene', 'Halyfax russet', 'niger carsey Halyfax',² &c. In 1560 there were 520 houses in the town of Halifax alone, and the whole parish was declared to be so populous that it sent 12,000 men against the Duke of Westmoreland's rising in 1569.³

This progress was the subject of comment by many writers during the sixteenth century, and was probably the cause of the legend, accepted by all historians until quite recently, that the population of Halifax township in 1450 was so small as to be accommodated in 13 houses.⁴ Such a statement was entirely untrue, but it was part of the glamour of romance which hovered round the head of Halifax. Tudor writers waxed eloquent in

¹ Cloth booths in Bartholomew Fair are frequently mentioned in Halifax wills. See Chapter V, on markets and merchants.

² *York Wills and Inventories* (Surtees Soc., vol. xlv), p. 301.

³ Camden, *Britannia*, ff. 709-10. Also most old Halifax historians.

⁴ For a criticism of the statement see 'The Making of Halifax', by J. Lister, pp. 142-4, in Ling Roth, *Yorkshire Coiners*.

their praise of the parish, and unsolicited testimonials were frequently bestowed. Camden declared, 'There is nothing so admirable in this town as the industry of the inhabitants, who, notwithstanding an unprofitable soil, not fit to live in, have so flourished by the cloath trade (which within these last seventy years they fell to), that they are both very rich, and have gained great reputation for it above their neighbours'.¹ Edmund, Archbishop of York, wrote in 1584 of the populace of Halifax, 'It is a good people, and they well deserve to be considered of';² and Ryder (1588), having eulogized the Yorkshire clothiers generally, singled out for special praise the 'inhabitants of Hallyfax'. Their virtues were extolled as follows:

'They excel the rest in policy and industrie, for the use of their trade and groundes, and after the rude and arrogant manner of their wilde country they surpas the rest in wisdom and wealth. They despise theire olde fashions if they can heer of a new, more comodyus, rather affectinge novelties than allied to old ceremonies. . . . Yt sholde seem that desier of praise and sweetnes of their dew commendacion hath begoon and mayntayned ammonge the people a natural ardeny of newe inventions annexid to an unyealdirge industry, and by enforcinge grounds beyond all hope of fertyllyty, so that yff the rest of the county wolde in this followe them but afar off, the force and welth of Yorkshier wolde be soon dabled.'³

In short, the Halifax area had witnessed a period of surprising prosperity during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, insomuch that its development was to contemporaries a matter for awe and wonder, and to the Halifax man himself a perennial theme for jubilant self-satisfaction.

The progress of Leeds, Wakefield, and Bradford, though not so rapid, was little less important. Here the woollen industry provided employment for the greater part of the inhabitants, and the output of cloth steadily advanced. The fulling mill at Leeds, which in 1381 was let for 30s. per annum,⁴ was leased in 1488 for 46s.,⁵ so the profits accruing from that mill must have

¹ Camden, *op. cit.*, ff. 709-10.

² *D. S. P., Eliz.*, Addenda, xxviii. 85 (1584).

³ James Ryder's *Commendations of Yorkshire*, addressed to Lord Burghley (1588), Lansd. MSS. (Brit. Mus.), quoted in Ling Roth, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-3.

⁴ Minister's Accounts, bundle 507, no. 8228, 7 & 8 Rich. II. For this reference see *Victoria County History, Yorkshire*, ii. 409.

⁵ *Materials for a History of Henry VII* (Rolls Series), ii. 329.

increased somewhat in the intervening period. Leeds and Wakefield were becoming famous as markets and as the homes of merchants. By the seventeenth century Wakefield was the principal wool market of the district, whilst Leeds had become the emporium for cloth. Wakefield 'chapmen'¹ are frequently mentioned during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and a complaint made in the reign of James I bore witness to the rise of a native trading class in the Riding. The complaint occurs in a pamphlet analysing the causes of the decay of the trade of Hull, and the grievance is stated thus:

'And that which is a further great and considerable damage to the merchants of this towne (Hull) is a set of young adventurers that are lately sprung up at Leeds and at other places, amongst the clothiers, who at little or no charges buy and engross as they please, to the great hurt of the inhabitants and merchants of this towne.'²

These upstarts we shall meet again when we consider the methods of marketing and foreign trade, but it is desirable at this juncture to note their existence.

When Leland came through Yorkshire in the reign of Henry VIII, he made observations on the economic activities of the towns through which he passed. His remarks give us an interesting, though fleeting, glimpse of the centres of the industry:³

'*Wakefeld* apou Calder, ys a quik market toune, and meately large; well served of flesch and fische from the Se and by ryvers, whereof dyvers be thereabouts at hande. So that al vitaille is very good chepe there. A right honest man shal fare well for 2 pens a meale. It standith now al by clothying.

'*Bradeforde*, a praty quik toune, dimideo aut eo amplius minus Wachfelda. It standith much by clothying.

'*Ledis*, 2 miles lower than Christal Abbay, on Aire Ryver, is a praty market, . . . as large as Bradeforde but not so quik. The toune standith most by clothing.'

Other writers make similar remarks, and supply abundant evidence to show that the whole district of which Leeds, Wakefield, Bradford, and Halifax were the head-quarters, was hard

¹ Thos. Peyntour of Wakefield, chapman, in debt for £4 (1486) (Patent Rolls, 4 Hen. VI, pt. i, m. 23)

² Pamphlet by John Ramsden, of Hull, quoted in Hadley's *History of Hull*, p. 115.

³ Leland, *Itinerary*, vii. 41-2.

work developing the textile industry. Further, there was already some degree of local specialization, and certain districts were becoming famous for the manufacture of distinct types of cloth. Leeds had already settled down to making 'broad cloth', and kept almost entirely to trade in that variety during the next two centuries. But the Halifax men, intent on paying the minimum of taxation on their wares, 'were, for their own private lucre and gain, and in diminucion of the King's subsidy and ulnage, encouraged rather to make kerseys than . . . cloths of assize',¹ and so, as a writer declared in 1588, 'at Halyfax there is no clothe made but yearde brode carsies'.²

With the ulnage returns of 1478 we come to the end of our statistics, and have no further evidence which gives anything approaching a complete estimate of the number of cloths produced in the county. Fortunately, however, there is a document, dated 1595, containing a survey of the Yorkshire industry,³ from which it is possible to glean a few figures, and to make one or two rough comparisons. The author of this report had been sent to carry out an inquiry into the extent of the manufacture of 'new draperies' in the county. He found scarcely any such manufacture, but placed on record an account of the extent of the older industry. Thus he found 'At Wackefeilde, Leedes, and some other smale villages, nere there aboutes, there is made about 30 packes of brode cloths every weecke, and ev'y packe is 4 whole clothes; the sortes made in Wackefeild are pukes, tawnyes, browns, blues, and some reddes; in Leedes of all colours'. If 120 cloths per week was the average output of these places, we may assume that the annual production was about 5,000. Compare this with the figures given in the ulnage returns; in 1468-9 these two towns were jointly credited with 408 cloths for 46 weeks, or about 460 for the year. Even supposing the estimate for the Elizabethan period to be excessive, the expansion must have been very great.

The same writer reported that 'At Penyston, Yellow, and Blackwood, and some villages there aLoutes, are made about

¹ See Chapter V for account of trials of 1613 and 1638.

² Document concerning project for setting up woollen concern at Skipton, *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, app. xiv, pt. iv, Kenyon MSS., p. 573 (1588).

³ Brother Peck's Certificate of New Draperies (1595), *D. S. P., Eliz.*, vol. 2.

1,000 peeces of white Penystone'. A 'Penistone' counted as half a cloth of assize, so the output from the Penistone area would be equivalent to about 500 whole cloths. In the ulnage accounts the Penistone area would come under the heading of Barnsley, the annual output of which in 1468-9 amounted to about 100 cloths. Here again the development during the Tudor period must have been considerable.

The comparison cannot be carried farther, since the Elizabethan survey makes no estimate of the number of cloths made in the Halifax or Bradford districts. But the witnesses in a lawsuit of 1613 declared most confidently that the output of kerseys alone from the parishes of Halifax, Bradford, Bingley, and Keighley amounted to over 90,000 a year. This was almost certainly an exaggeration, but there can be no doubt that the industry in this area made very great strides during the Tudor period.

The result of all this progress was to give greater strength to the West Riding, and to draw its industrial life and wealth more into national regard. For centuries the district had enjoyed comparative immunity from governmental interference, since its cloths had been such as seldom found their way to the wider markets, or attracted national attention. Now all this was changing, as Northern Dozens and Yorkshire kerseys, improved perhaps in quality, were purchased by such people as the monks of Durham,¹ or for the choristers at Cambridge,² or passed to Blackwell Hall and the markets of Europe. The entry of West Riding goods more prominently into the field of national and international commerce turned many eyes to this hitherto despised portion of the county, and the 'cloathing townes' began to receive attention from many quarters.

The first of these newly interested parties was the State itself, which, in the sixteenth century, cast aside the air of tolerance with which it had formerly regarded the North Country in its regulation of the cloth industry. Now that the cheap Yorkshire pieces were being carried in large quantities to Germany, Poland, and Russia, they must be subjected to the same scrutiny as the

¹ Thorold Rogers, *Hist. of Agriculture and Prices*, iv. 106.

² Several entries of northern russets and other northern cloths for choristers at Cambridge about the middle of the sixteenth century. Rogers, *op. cit.* iii. 508; prices vary from 1s. to 5s. per yard.

of other parts, lest by their inferior quality the fair fame of English fabrics should be dragged in the mire, and the 'vent', or sale, of cloths be lost to this country. Hence there began a long series of legislative attempts to bring the Yorkshiremen to the strait path of industrial honesty, and we must give a whole chapter to a consideration of this State intervention.¹

Secondly, the clothing area had gained some political strength. In 1597 there was a parliamentary election, and on this occasion one of the candidates for Yorkshire was Sir Thomas Hoby. The following letter from the Archbishop of York to Robert Cecil explains itself. Speaking of Hoby, the Archbishop says he is 'a gentleman of very great hope, but is not yet so well known, and was hindered specially by a rumour, true or false I know not, spread abroad in the clothing towns of the West Riding, which yield the greatest number of freeholders. The speech was that in the last Parliament his brother, Sir Edward Hoby, did prefer a bill against Northern cloths, which they thought did much concern them'.²

Thirdly, the pocket of the West Riding began to receive more attention from the State, and from others. This was especially the case when the need for ships, in the last decades of the sixteenth century, caused levies of vessels to be made on the ports of the kingdom. The demands generally took the form of ordering each port to supply one or more ships, fully manned, furnished, and equipped, for a period of service at home or abroad.³ The Yorkshire orders came to Hull, and in 1588 and subsequent years York and Hull, after violent altercations as to their respective shares, joined in defraying the cost of the Yorkshire ships. In the early months of 1596 Hull was requested to furnish one ship for the expedition of that summer. But the port had at last awakened to the fact that an El Dorado existed abroad, and therefore made suit that the 'three great clothing towns and places belonging thereto, viz. Halifax and the' Chapter IV.

The clothing area was not backward in its loyalty to Elizabeth. When a Bond of Association was drawn up, it was received with great favour by a number of gentlemen and of the principall freeholders and clothiers of the county, especially about Halifax, Wakefield, and Bradford, 5,300 of that number sealed, subscribed, and sworn thereto' (*D. S. P., Eliz., Addenda*, 1597, 2). Letter quoted above is in Salisbury MSS., vii. 436.

The story of this Ship Money encounter is drawn from the Salisbury MSS. (*Hist. MSS. Comm.*), and the Ordinances of the Privy Council

Vicarage, Leeds, Wakefield, and their several parishes' should be compelled to share in the cost of the vessel. In a letter to Robert Cecil Hull explained the reason for making this request. 'They (the clothing towns) are many ways relieved by this port, by the uttering their cloth to a great proportion, and so have their oils, wood, alum, &c., and like helps for their trade brought in by the shipping of this place, . . . and consequently divers of them are not only clothiers, but merchants also, to the great hindrance of the merchants here and at York.'¹ An order was at once granted in accordance with Hull's request, and the 'cloathing townes' were told of their liabilities. But with an astuteness typical of the Riding the clothiers refused entirely to stir a finger towards collecting the £400 demanded of them. They declared that they belonged to inland towns bordering on no river nor haven, 'nor having any vent of any comodity by the Porte of Hulle'.² The Privy Council, with obliging credulity, believed this statement, and the petitioners were graciously 'excused from any payment whatsoever'.³

This was in the spring of the year. Autumn came round, and with it the expedition returned, presenting to Hull a bill for £1,400. Again the port sent its lamentation to the Privy Council, and again the levy was imposed upon the West Riding.⁴ Letters, petitions, commands, all were showered on the heads of the clothiers, who, led by Sir John Savill and other justices of the peace, took up a firm attitude of refusal to pay. The Privy Council hurled its thunderbolts, the Council of the North joined in with some forcible utterances, and the Archbishop of York made attempts at peaceful persuasion. For over a year these commands and entreaties were sent to the obstinate towns, but Savill and his followers calmly ignored the efforts of Archbishop and Council. On October 30, 1597, the Privy Council fulminated once more. 'We have many times heretofore written our letters for the contribution to be made by the clothynge townes in the West Rydyng of Yorkeshire', and the constant neglect on the part of the local justices 'shows an evident note of slacknesse'.⁵ Still the money was not forthcoming, and at last, in

¹ Salisbury MSS., vi. 58-9.

² Privy Council Ordinances, March 28, 1596, petition from Yorkshire.

³ Ibid., April 1, 1596.

⁴ Salisbury MSS., vi. 356, August 30, 1596.

⁵ Ordinances of Privy Council, October 30, 1597.

February 1598, patience being exhausted, the Privy Council summoned four of the local magistrates to London to explain their passive resistance.¹ Savill was especially reprimanded.

You have not only refused to shewe your duties in contrybut-
vage to so necessarie and honorable a service, but have eluded
our earnest direction by dillatory, frivolous and framed excuses.
Full of contrition, the quartet faced the Council, and were
informed that now 'the money must be gathered of the clothiers
and other chapmen, as of the welthier sort of the inhabitants of
that Rydinge. . . . If there be any slacknesse, you must come
along hether, and make up for your defaultes'. At last the
clothiers were driven to surrender, and in the next Quarter
Sessions at Pontefract an assessment was made 'for the con-
tribucon of fower hundreth poundes to be made by the clothiers
and inhabitauntes of the Westridyng'.²

Though defeated at this encounter, the clothiers met every
subsequent demand with similar silent obstinacy. Thus, in
1626, when Hull was ordered to provide two ships, it had to
go through a repetition of the former struggle, and eventually
wrote to the Privy Council, 'Wee have sent sondrie tymes to
them of Hallyfaxe, Leedes, and Wakefield, for their proportion-
able assistance . . . and yet we have received no monies, neither
from them nor from the countie'.³ In all this affair, it is im-
portant to note the attitude of the justices of the peace. They
were evidently on the best of terms with the people around
them, knew their needs and possibilities, and were prepared to
stand up, even against the decrees of the central authority, in
defence of their fellows. This spirit would mean much when the
regulation of industry was placed by law in the hands of the
local magistracy. The success of any Act would depend on
whether or not the magistrates of the locality thought its enforce-
ment would conduce to the welfare of the surrounding population.
This must be kept in mind when examining the attempts made
by the State to supervise the textile industry in the county. The
justices of the peace were the champions of local freedom in the
matter of the Ship Money; they would be equally the friend of
the clothier against the demands of a new and oppressive cloth law.

¹ Ibid., April 14, 1598.

² West Riding Sessions Rolls, 1598: Pontefract. Yorks. Arch. Soc.,
Record Series, vol. iii.

³ D. S. P., Chas. I, dxxv. 13, October 30, 1626.

Thus, to draw this chapter to a close, the West Riding cloth field of Elizabeth's reign had attained a position of importance and was being recognized as one of the centres of general supply. Essex might boast its bays and serges, Norwich its fustians and worsteds, Devonshire its kerseys,¹ but the cloths of Kendal, the 'cottons' of Manchester, and the Northern Dozens, kerseys, and broad cloths of Yorkshire were becoming famed at home and abroad, and the West Riding had already laid the foundations of its reputation as the provider of cheap cloths to the poorer classes of the whole world.

APPENDIX

THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE ENGLISH WOOLLEN INDUSTRY IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Ulnage Returns² are available for almost every county in England, and supply a mass of data showing the relative production of woollen cloth in various parts of the country. Unfortunately, we cannot be certain that the figures submitted by the ulnager's representatives are exhaustive. The subsidy may have been collected less thoroughly in some counties than others: judicious bribes may have secured exemption for some clothiers: the collector may have forwarded under-statements, and kept for himself a part of the revenue: and finally there may have been official exemptions from payment in some cases. On the other hand, these conditions might exist in all counties, or different conditions in different counties might to some extent produce a similar margin of error. On the whole, the returns are useful in affording a rough general comparison of the production for sale in the various areas, and it will be seen that some interesting conclusions can be reached.

Figures are obtainable for most counties for some part of the period 1468-78. For Northumberland and Hertford the latest returns are of a much earlier date, but with these two exceptions the following list is drawn from accounts dated between 1468 and 1473. An average annual output would have been preferable to a figure for some particular year, but the returns are not sufficiently full to allow the calculation of an average over the ten years following 1468. Further, in one or two instances the return actually made was for a period shorter or longer than one year. In such cases, the amount has been increased or reduced

¹ Fuller, *The Church History of Britain*, 1655 ed., p. 141.

² The Accounts are under the Record Office reference, Exch. K.R. Accounts bundles 339-46.

to a twelve-months' basis. Such a step is open to the objection that the production was not uniform all the year round, winter being a bad period for drying and finishing cloths. Hence an account of nine months' production might include the busy season, and a fifteen-months' figure might include two busy seasons; calculations based on these figures might, therefore, over-estimate the annual production. Happily, this calculation was only necessary in the case of one or two of the smaller counties, and does not therefore produce any great error. In the case of Oxfordshire and Cornwall there is no separate figure, as the returns are attached to those of adjacent counties; but from almost contemporaneous returns it is possible to estimate the approximate output in these two counties. Subject to these limitations, the production of woollen cloths for sale about 1470 can be stated as follows:

County.	Year.	Number of Cloths.
Bedford	1468-9	69
Berkshire	"	1,293½
Bucks.	"	68
Cambridge	1469-70	41
Cornwall	1472-3 (approx.)	30
Derby	1469-70	40
Devon	1472-3	1,036½
Dorset	1467-8	707½
Essex	1468-9	2,627½
Gloucester, Co. of	"	1,288
Bristol	"	3,586½
Hants	1471-2	1,450½
Hereford	1469-70	339½
Hertford	1447-8	249½
Hunts.	1471-2	30
Kent	1469-70	1,027
Leicestershire	"	66
Lincolnshire	1472-3	286
London and Middlesex	1469-70	983
Norfolk (County)	"	273
Norwich, City of	1468-9	557
Northants.	1472-3	780½
Notts.	1469-70	69
Northumberland	1441-2	120
Oxfordshire	1468-9 (approx.)	200
Rutland	1472-3	10
Shropshire	1468-9	110
Somerset	"	4,981½
Suffolk	"	5,188
Staffs.	"	108½
Surrey and Sussex	1469-70	760
Warwickshire	"	1,200
Wilts.	"	4,310
Worcestershire	1468-9	477½
York, Co. and City	"	4,972
Total		39,345

Total = 4,874½

Total = 830

The counties for which no returns were made are Cumberland, Durham, Westmoreland, Lancashire, and Cheshire, i.e. those parts which manufactured only for domestic consumption, or which were still exempt from subsidy on account of the low value and coarse quality of their wares. All the counties of the southern, western, and midland areas produced saleable cloths, but in nine counties (Bedford, Bucks., Cambridge, Derby, Hunts., Leics., Notts., Cornwall, and Rutland) the annual output was less than 100 cloths. In three others (Northumberland, Shropshire, and Staffordshire) it was between 100 and 200, and in five others (Hereford, Lincolnshire, Herts., Worcestershire, and Oxford) it was between 200 and 500. A glance at the accompanying map reveals the significance of these facts, and points to the following conclusions:

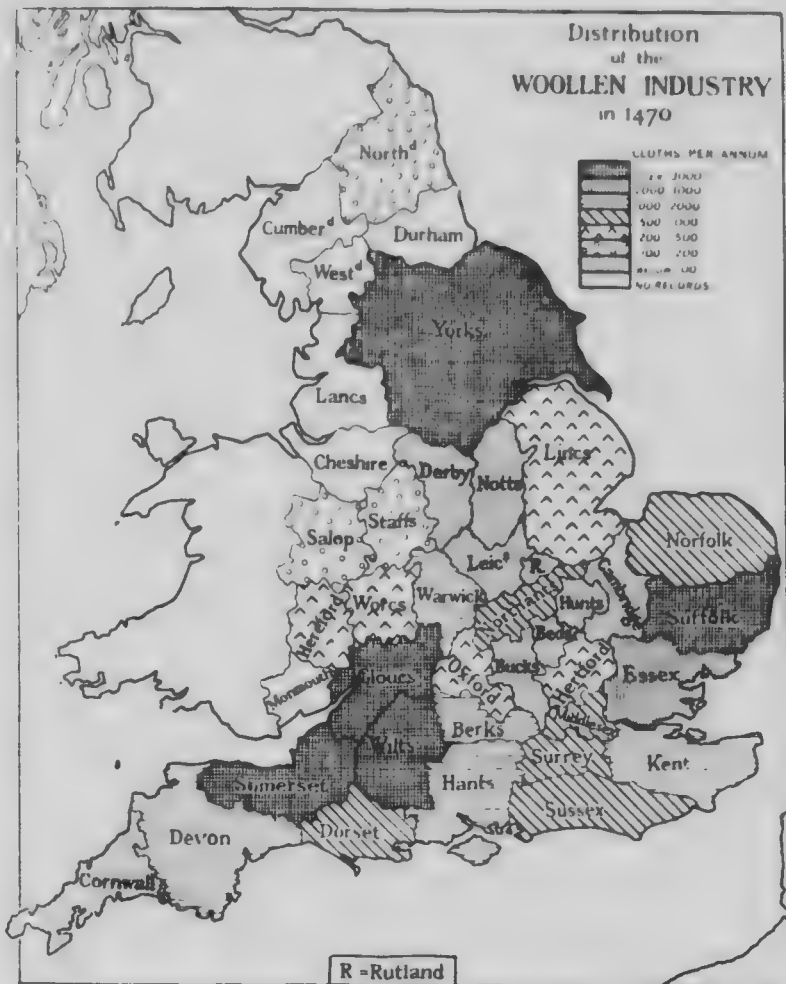
1. The northern counties, excluding Yorkshire and Northumberland (which really meant Newcastle), were of no importance in the cloth market or in the eyes of the Exchequer.

2. Two midland blocks of counties, (a) Derby, Notts., Leics., and Rutland, (b) Cambridge, Hunts., Beds., and Bucks., separated by Northants., produced less than two cloths per week per county; in four counties (Cambridge, Derby, Hunts., and Rutland), less than one cloth was produced each week, and the whole eight counties together made less than eight cloths weekly.

3. With the exception of Warwickshire (where Coventry was responsible for seven-eighths of the production), Northamptonshire (where the county town produced 765½ cloths out of a total of 780½), and Yorkshire, the annual output was less than 500 cloths per annum in all the counties north and west of a line drawn from the southern part of Hereford to the south-eastern corner of Hertford, and thence up to the Wash.

Producing 500 to 1,000 cloths we find Dorset, Middlesex (including London), Norfolk (including Norwich), Northamptonshire, Surrey, and Sussex. The production in Middlesex had been higher earlier in the reign of Edward IV,¹ but experienced a heavy fall during subsequent years, and the average output in the reign of Henry VIII was only 856 cloths. Norfolk and the city of Norwich were evidently not great producers of woollen cloths. Possibly the worsted industry was by this time engaging the greater attention, and worsted cloths did not pay subsidy. But all the figures for Norfolk show that this county was quite a secondary field of woollen production. More pieces were made in Northampton than in Norwich. Surrey and Sussex together produced less than 1,000 cloths, but there is no evidence to show the output from each county.

¹ Production for Middlesex, 1463-4, 1,377; 1466-7, 1,711 (Exch. K.R., bundle 346, no. 20).



Clarendon Press, Oxford

Of the larger producers, eleven counties were responsible for over 1,000 cloths each. Of these, five made between 1,000 and 2,000 (Berks., Devon, Hants., Kent, and Warwick), Essex made over 2,000, four counties (Somerset, Yorks., Gloucester, and Wilts.) over 4,000, and Suffolk alone over 5,000. These five chief counties stood in order of production as follows :

Suffolk	.	.	.	.	5,188
Somerset	.	.	.	.	4,981½
Yorks.	.	.	.	.	4,972
Gloucs.	.	.	.	.	4,874½
Wilts.	.	.	.	.	4,310
Total					24,326

Thus 62 per cent. of the total production of the country came from five counties : 12½ per cent. from Yorkshire alone.

The above figures and the accompanying map show that the West of England counties comprised the chief textile area. Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, and Somerset made 14,166 cloths (i. e. 36 per cent. of the total output), and if to this we add the yield of the adjacent counties, Oxford, Berkshire, Hants, Dorset, Devon, and Cornwall, the total for the nine counties is 18,884 cloths, i. e. 48 per cent. of the country's production.

The East Anglian area came second, though Suffolk was the largest producer in England. Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hertford, and Middlesex together made 9,878 cloths, i. e. about 25 per cent. of the total production.

To sum up, two main conclusions are apparent from the above data :

1. That by 1470 the textile industry was largely concentrated in three chief areas (the West of England, East Anglia, and Yorkshire) and one smaller area (Warwick and Northamptonshire). The West of England counties were the largest producers, whilst in the northern counties (Yorkshire excepted) and Midlands (Warwick and Northamptonshire excepted) production was negligible.

2. That Yorkshire ranked third amongst the textile counties. The adjoining counties were of little or no importance, and hence as a clothing area the North of England was less important than its southern and western rivals. As generations went by, the Yorkshire production increased, until by the eighteenth century Yorkshire alone produced as much as either of the other two areas.

CHAPTER III

ORGANIZATION OF THE WEST RIDING INDUSTRY IN THE FIFTEENTH TO SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

(a) *The Clothier and the Domestic System*

HAVING traced the growing importance of the extra-urban manufacture and the decline of the textile guilds, we can now turn to an examination of the economic structure of the woollen industry under the changed conditions. This leads us to a study of what has become known as the domestic system, with the clothier as the economic unit. The term 'domestic system' is admittedly unsatisfactory, for it emphasizes only one fact, namely that manufacture was carried on in the home, in contrast to the factory system which came afterwards. As such, the term might be applied equally to that stage in industrial evolution which we label the gild system. The suggested alternative, 'commission system', is open to criticism, and it seems impossible to invent a really adequate title to describe, in a couple of words, the distinctive characteristics of the industrial society which came between the gild and the factory. Confining our attention to the textile industry, we might use the phrase 'clothier system', but usage has established the claims of the older term. Let us therefore retain the name 'domestic system', understanding thereby that state of industrial life in which the clothiers controlled the trade, with industry established in the cottages scattered throughout the length and breadth of the county.

The domestic system did not hold all the field, for a small amount of manufacturing was carried on under factory conditions. The expansion of the industry in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had brought into existence a number of big producers, who in some cases gathered their many employees under one roof, and established a factory. Of the existence of the mill-owner (to use a modern term) there is conclusive evidence, but very little descriptive data. Jack of Newbury in the South had his counterparts in the North in the persons of

Hodgkins of Halifax, Byram (or Brian) of Manchester, and Cuthbert of Kendal.¹ These men are said to have been factory owners, though we know little of them except their names. But their existence shows that the economies of the division of labour and of direct supervision were becoming recognized, and the passage of the anti-factory Act of 1555² indicates that the trend towards factory organization was becoming sufficiently marked to merit national attention. But that Act did not apply to the North Country, the inhabitants of which area were left free to congregate looms as much as they pleased; and yet we do not find there any flood of factory organization. The reasons for the comparative rarity of the factory, especially in the North, are probably to be found in the following three factors. (1) The anti-capitalistic spirit of the age, so far as industry was concerned, expressed in the Act of 1555. (2) The absence of large sums of capital available for industry. This would be the case especially in Yorkshire, where the clothiers were comparatively poor, and where such capital as was available went into commerce. (3) The primitive nature of the cloth-making apparatus and processes. The utmost that a factory could do was to gather together a number of spinning-wheels, hand-loom, dye-vats, shearing-boards, &c. A factory so equipped would allow supervision more effectively to regulate the hours of labour, prevent idleness among the employees, and maintain uniform standards of production; above all, the concentration of employees on one spot prevented that waste of time which occurred when wool had to be carried a distance between each process. These advantages might have been sufficient to cause an adoption of factory production; but against them must be placed the initial cost of erecting a big building, providing homes for workpeople, and other preliminary charges, too heavy for a person not possessed of large sums of capital. The production of a 'Northern Dozen' occupied fifteen persons for one week, so a factory would have to be large enough to hold a great number of workers to produce say half a score of such cloths weekly. In a few cases wealthy clothiers acquired deserted monasteries at a low price, and were thus provided

¹ Cooke Taylor, *Factory System*, early chapters, and De Gibbins, *Industrial History of England*, p. 66.

² Statute 2 & 3 Philip and Mary, c. 11.

with a big building ready-made;¹ but, with the exception of such instances, the initial costs made the factory impracticable. Further, the Tudor factory could offer no advantages in the way of power or accelerated technical processes. In these circumstances, the balance between advantage and disadvantage was very slight, and the line of least resistance was to allow employees to remain scattered. Until the eighteenth century, therefore, the cottage was the centre of industry and the factory a rarity, treated by travelling authors as a curio so strange as to merit description along with the Strid at Bolton, the Dropping Well at Knaresborough, or the cloth market on Leeds Bridge.

We turn therefore to the predominant figure in English economic life, the clothier. Let us first define the word. According to the Statute of Artificers and Apprentices, 1563, the clothier was the person who 'put cloth to making and sale';² and the documents of a lawsuit in 1613 described four Yorkshiremen as 'clothiers, or persons that do trade and sell Yorkshire kersies'.³ The 'clothyear' (to give the spelling as it appears in some Yorkshire Tudor wills) was the person responsible for the production of cloths. He provided the necessary capital, purchased the raw material, saw it through the various processes, and then marketed the piece. He was the master, the employer, the 'head of the firm'. But the 'firm' might be of any size, from the family unit upwards, and the exact character of the clothier's functions varied according to the size of his concern. If he employed only his own family and one or two outsiders, his own share of the work would of necessity be industrial as well as commercial: he was wool-buyer, weaver, and cloth-seller. If the scale of operations was large, with numbers of spinners, weavers, &c., employed, the clothier would not engage in any industrial processes himself, but confine his attention to buying the raw material, employing people to work it up, and selling the cloth. His employees might work entirely under his roof, in which case he would exercise a general supervision over their work. Sometimes a part would work in the clothier's establishment, the remainder in their own homes, but in very

¹ e.g. Malmesbury Abbey was so used after the Dissolution. See Ashley, *Economic Organization of England*, p. 150. It seems very probable that many factories had their origin in this way.

² 5 Eliz., c. 4

³ See Chapter VI for details of this lawsuit.

many instances all the work was done in the employees' cottages, in which case the clothier, stationed in his warehouse, would control the distribution of raw material and the payment of wages when the work was returned. Thus the way in which the clothier spent his time depended largely on the extent of his output, and that difference between the character of the Yorkshire and West of England clothiers so frequently commented upon by economic historians was entirely due to this difference in the scale of operations. It was a matter of degree rather than of kind.¹ The almost purely commercial activity of the Wiltshire clothiers was part of the division of labour which becomes possible with large-scale production. Wherever Yorkshire clothiers in the Tudor and Stuart periods attained any great heights of prosperity and large output, they became very much akin to their fellows in the West, commercial rather than industrial. But whilst the big man apparently predominated in Somerset and Wiltshire, 'meaner clothiers' formed the greater part of the Yorkshire industrial army. This latter fact was responsible for those features which characterized the Yorkshire manufacture until the coming of steam-power and the factory, the chief of which were as follows:

(1) Industrial labour on the part of the clothier and his family was the general lot, and was accompanied in many cases by comparative poverty. The typical clothier of the south-western counties, working on a large scale, had become wealthy, and according to a pamphlet by May² (1613) increased in fame and riches, his house like a king's court, his table replenished with feasts, his hospitality bountiful, and with such plenty and content on every side that crowned heads were highly pleased with the entertainment received at his hands. The family of such a clothier would scarcely condescend to engage in textile work, or have industrial implements in the house. Hence there must have been a marked contrast between the condition of the clothiers' houses and families in the two areas.

(2) The small extent to which capitalism had developed in

¹ The report of the Parliamentary Committee of 1806 has created the impression that the differences between the industrial organization in Yorkshire and the West of England were fundamental. This was not so.

² May, 'A Declaration of the Estate of Clothing now used within this Realm', Brit. Mus., 712.g. 16 (1).

the Yorkshire industry had as its counterpart a very slight cleavage between capital and labour, and a freedom from such serious labour disputes as marked the other textile areas.

3) The inability of the small clothier to buy large quantities of wool made necessary the rise of middlemen whose business it was to provide the West Riding masters with wool according to their needs, both as to quantity and quality. (See last section of this chapter.)

4) As the smaller men must sell their wares without delay, and were unable to take them to London or the Continent, numerous local weekly markets were necessary, with an army of factors and merchants acting as a medium between the small independent producers and the wider English and European market.

Throughout Yorkshire wills, from the fifteenth century onwards,¹ we encounter the last testaments of clothiers in all parts of the West Riding. The nature of these clothiers varied with the man and the district, and there was an unbroken gradation from the 'meaner' up to the wealthy. One feature was common to all, namely the alliance between farming and industry. Even the busiest clothier had his plot of land, and some part of his sustenance was drawn from that source. The word 'yeoman' was often only an *alias* for 'clothier', and it was by the joint produce of the land and the loom that the Yorkshireman found his livelihood secured.

The most numerous section of the Yorkshire textile community was that of the smallest clothiers, who were to be found all over the Riding, but especially concentrated in the Halifax area, where they seem to have constituted the greater part of the population. We first make the acquaintance of these men in the Ulnage Returns for the reign of Richard II, when the West Riding contained none but small producers. In the Account for 1396-7, Enima Earle was the largest contributor of 11 age, being responsible for 48 whole cloths of assize in 54 weeks. If, as was probably the case, each cloth really meant two 'Dozens', the leading clothier of Wakefield produced 14 'Dozens' in a week. The average for the whole of Wakefield

¹ See volumes of wills published by Surtees, Yorkshire Archaeological, Thoresby, Bradford Antiquarian, and other similar societies. For detailed references, see Bibliography.

was less than one 'Dozen' per clothier per week. In Leeds the average weekly output of each of the four clothiers mentioned in the Account was just over one 'Dozen'; in Ripon it was one-third of a whole cloth of assize, and for the whole Riding the production amounted to about ten whole cloths per clothier per annum. By the sixteenth century many bigger producers had appeared, and the weekly output of the smallest men was now, as a rule, one kersey.

The best description of the small clothier class is found in the preamble to the 'Halifax Act' of 1555.¹ Doubtless, as in most preambles, there is hyperbole in the praises, both moral and material, but apart from this glossing the description is accurate.

'Forasmuche as the Paryshe of Halyfaxe and other places theronto adjoyning, beyng planted in the grete waste and moores, where the Fertilitie of Grounde ys not apte to bryng forthe any Corne nor good Grasse, but in rare Places, and by exceedinge and greate industrie of the inhabitantes, and the same inhabitantes altogether doo lyve by clothe making, for the greate parte of them neyther gettethe Corne nor ys hable to keepe a Horse to carry Woolles, nor yet to bye much woolle att once, but hathe ever used onelie to repayre to the Towne of Halyfaxe, and some other nigh theronto, and ther to bye upon the Wooll-dryver, some a stone, some twoo, and some three or foure accordinge to theyre habillitee, and to carrye the same to their houses, some iij, iiij, v, and vj myles of, upon their Headdes and Backes, and so to make and converte the same eyther into Yarne or Clothe, and to sell the same, and so to bye more Woolle of the Wooll-dryver, by meanes of whiche Industrie the barreyn Gronde in those partes be nowe muche inhabyted, and above fyve hundrethe householdes there newly increased within this fourtye yeares past.'

In view of these local conditions the district was granted special permission to purchase its wool through middlemen (wooldrivers), whilst the rest of the country was forbidden to do so.² Similar pictures were painted by witnesses in the clothiers' lawsuits of the following century; many spoke of the parish of Halifax, with its 'very mounteynous and barreyn soyle', and its poor people, 'who, making every week a coarse kersey, and being compelled to sell the same at the week end,

¹ 2 & 3 Philip and Mary, c. 13.

² See last section of present chapter.

and with the money received for the same to provide bothe stufte wherewith to make another the week following, and also victualls to susteyne themselves and their families till another be made and sold', supported themselves only by dint of frugal living and ceaseless toil.¹ Such clothiers were not peculiar to Halifax, but formed the lower grade of independent workers throughout the Riding. It must have been a hand-to-mouth existence for such men. Unable to make long journeys into the wool-producing areas, they bought their wool from dealers or wool-staplers, made it up into yarn or cloth, and then sold the yarn to weavers or the rough unfinished piece to merchants or agents. Thus they trod the weekly round of production and sale; profits were small, but the men were independent, and that was probably worth a great deal. They leased or owned a cottage, with a toft of ground adjoining, on which they fed a little live stock. They had their loom, spinning-wheels, a set of 'walker sheres', and often a dye-vat or 'lead'. Employing their own family, and occasionally one or two outsiders, they produced one piece weekly, and so were able to jog along more or less contentedly, provided no new burden was imposed on them in the way of a levy for Ship Money or an increase in the subsidy on their kerseys. One gets an interesting glimpse of the family life of such men from such wills as the following, wherein Robert Sydall, clothier, of Holbeck, makes the following bequest: 'To Elizabeth, my wife, such vessels and furniture as belongeth to her brewinge, and all that stock of money which she haith gotten by her bakinge and brewinge.' Sydall also shares out certain lands which he holds on lease, and to his wife and children leaves 'one fatt cowe, and the fletches of a little swyne that is already kill'd'.² Evidently the live stock kept on the plots of land did much to provide meat and milk, whilst the earnings of the wife's spare hours had been laid aside for a rainy day.

One reason for the existence of this large class of meaner clothiers is probably to be found in the fact that the kersey was the staple cloth manufactured, especially around Halifax. According to a document of 1588, *six* persons would be occupied

¹ Depositions of witnesses in Metcalfe case of 14 Chas. I. See account in Chapter VI.

² Thoresby Soc. publications, vol. i, p. 384.

for a week at sorting, carding, spinning, weaving, and shearing, in order to produce one finished but undyed kersey.¹ The wool-driver, by selling sorted wool, freed the small clothier from the first of the above-enumerated processes: most kerses were sold without being sheared: fulling and possibly tentering would be done by the fuller. Hence the small clothier, assisted by four workers, would be able to carry through the carding, spinning, and weaving of a kersey in a week. The four assistants might all be members of the clothier's family, especially as children were inured to work at a very tender age: but should the family supply of labour be inadequate, an apprentice was taken, or one or two women were hired to assist in spinning. Thus there was a distinct connexion between the labour supply required to make one kersey a week and the normal size of the clothier's establishment. Further, it seems certain that there existed a small class of independent men who were weavers only.² The preamble of the Halifax Act states that some of the small clothiers only went so far as to work the wool up into yarn, and then sold it. At the same time the Yorkshire wills reveal the existence of independent weavers, who probably purchased the yarn from the yarn-makers, and simply carried out the weaving processes.

From the poorer clothiers there was a gradual rise to their more wealthy neighbours, who engaged in a little farming as a by-occupation, but whose chief interest lay in the production of cloth in larger quantities. These men, who were to be found especially in the villages near Leeds, lived in a state of simple plenty.³ Their houses were surrounded by a garden or orchard, and several closes of land were owned or rented, which, combined together, allowed for the keeping of numerous domestic animals. Cows, a horse or ass, swine, and poultry were always kept, and as winter came along a cow or pig was killed and salted to provide meat during the months of frost and snow. Of cloth-making utensils there was a full set. The 'brode lome' on

¹ *Kenyon MSS., Hist. MSS. Comm.*, app. xiv, pt. iv, p. 573. Draft of scheme for establishing some cloth-making venture at Skipton.

² *D. S. P., Jas. I.*, lxxx. 13, describes such a class of weavers. For a typical weaver's will, see that of George Goodall, of Tong, 1552, in *Thoresby Soc. publications*, vol. xix, pt. ii, no. 4, 1913.

³ See *Surveys of Manor of Leeds, Wills, miscellaneous MSS.*, and *Leeds Parish Church Registers*, all in *Thoresby Soc. volumes*.

which the 'Northern Dozens' were woven, the 'leade' or 'lyttinge leade', in which the wool was dyed, the 'shere borde' and 'walker sheres', with which the surface of the cloth was cropped fine and smooth after fulling, all were to be seen in the loom-shop or work-chamber.¹ Outside, in the garth or close, stood the 'wool hedge', on which the wool was spread to dry before dyeing, and the long wooden tenter frame, on which the piece, after shrinking in the fulling process, was finally stretched to the desired dimensions and left to dry.

In most cases these larger clothiers were at the same time employers and workmen. They took apprentices, who learned the various branches of the trade during long years of service under the master. They employed journeymen and women, who either in the workshop of the clothier or in their own cottages prepared the yarn and wove the piece. The clothier then took the piece to the fulling-mili, or 'walk-miln' as it was still commonly called, and, after it had received a thorough washing and milling, brought it home, sheared, dressed, and entered it, and finally carried or sent it to the market.

The character of these more wealthy clothiers can be well realized by examining an inventory of the stock-in-trade of one of their number. Let us take that of 'John Pawson, late of Kyrkgaite in Leeds . . . Clothier', dated 1576.² Pawson belonged to what one might call the upper middle class of his fraternity. His house was small, containing three chief rooms—the 'Offyse house' or kitchen, which was the only room to possess a fire-place; the parlour, which also served as a bedroom, and store-room for the 'xij beiff flickes', or stock of salted meat for the winter; and the chamber, which contained the following stock of cloth-making materials:

xixj stone of collered wool (i. e. wool dyed before weaving),
xij stone of Butter (for greasing the wool before working
it in the quartren and a half of allum (for use in dyeing). . . . Item,
xixj stone of Collered Woll, more certeyne thrums (waste ends of
yarn and wool), xv stone of whyte woll, vij paire of woll combes.³

¹ At death it was customary to bequeath 'my best beast for my mortuary' to the parish priest. In one or two cases the 'best loom' took the place of the best beast.

² Printed in Thoresby Soc. publications, iv. 163-6.

³ In view of the fact that worsted cloths were not made in the West Riding until a century later, it is difficult to decide the use to which these combs were put.

Attached to the house were a workshop and loom-house, a dye-house, and 'laith' or barn. The contents of these rooms were:

'In the Shopp and Lomehouse, Inprimis, xxj dossans in Cloth (i. e. 21 pieces of cloth 13 yds. by 1½ yds.), price xxxiiij^h, one shere borde coverynge, xxij^a, . . . Item, x stone of yarne att spynners, and v stone of woll, viij^h v^c. One lome, Damyselles, Bartrees, Horne, Wheile (spinning-wheel), and other thynges theronto belongyng.'

'In the Leadhouse (dye-house), Laithe and Back Yearde, One Leade, . . . iiij tubbes, certeyne . . . yarne, baskettes, ij tenter heades, tenter rope, a cock and two hens, two kye, three styrkes, one horse, one pack saddle, two swyne, xxij^a.'

In addition to these goods, there were some 'good debtes' a few 'Desperat debtes', and notices of several leases and holdings of land. Pawson had under his care three apprentices who slept at their own homes, and this, along with the quantities of material in stock or out at the spinners' houses, shows that his business was comparatively large.

Taking another instance, the will of John Hollyred of Halifax, clothier (1574-5), makes special bequests alone to the extent of £130.¹ One might multiply instances of similar men, clothiers in comfortable or affluent circumstances,² with all the requisites for cloth-making, and also their many garths, orchards, 'hearbe gardens',³ tenter closes, and 'woll hedges'. At their death they bequeathed considerable sums to their relatives and servants, to the poor, or to 'mendinge of the hie wayes'. They made minute provision for the distribution of jackets, doublets, hose, shoes, houses, corn, cattle, horses, sheep, bedding, candlesticks, and silver spoons. In some wills we get a glimpse of another side of the clothier's life, as for example, in that of John Walker of Armiey, clothier (1588):

'To my son, my sword and my yewe bowe, and sixe of my best arrowes. To (another son) another bowe and sixe arrowes.'

Amongst such men the idea of large-scale production was not unknown. In 1588 a detailed scheme, apparently for some

¹ *North Country Wills*, Surtees Soc., vol. cxxi, pp. 70-1.

² See *Testamenta Leodiensia*, Thoresby volumes, *passim*.

³ Will of Wm. Sydall, Holbeck, clothier, January 1583-4: Thoresby Soc. publications, i. 383.

⁴ Will of John Walker of Armiey, clothier: Thoresby Soc., i. 385.

mountable institution, was drawn up, by which sixty persons were to be employed under one roof at Skipton. What came of the suggestion is not known.¹ In practice some of the largest men in Leeds employed over a score of workpeople, and a petition from that town, dated 1629, says that many of them were 'chiefly setting on worke about forty poor people in their Trade'.² In such cases the clothier would not engage in industrial work himself, but resembled textile leaders of the West of England.

It is amongst these men that we find the beginnings of the great families which directed social and municipal life in their locality during the next two centuries. Of them probably the most important name was that of John Harrison, the famous Leeds philanthropist, who was himself a clothier by trade. Harrison's work for his native place puts him in the first rank of public benefactor.

'He builde one parish church, a very faire one of free stone (St. John's, Briggate), . . . he founded an hospitall of twentie howses, he built likewise a chapell to itt, and a howse for the vicar to live in, . . . he built a free schoole, . . . he builde schole strecte with faire howses on booth sides . . . and att his owne proper cost and charge did he all this, and left large revenues to maintaine these things.'³

Harrison's property extended north of Upperhead and Lowerhead Rows, and his income was very large. But it was practically all devoted to public service, and the Grammar School, St. John's Church, and the provision for aged and poor were amongst the chief of his benefactions. He was also a man of great intellectual power, energy, and inspiration, and in his capacity of deputy alderman (the equivalent of deputy mayor) he did much to guide Leeds through critical times.⁴

Another figure of Elizabethan times is less famous in the general social life of Leeds, and so, although he seems to have been one of the most prominent industrial figures of his day, very little is known of him. This was Randall Tenche. Tenche was a clothier of no small importance, and an enterprising man,

Kenyon MSS., Hist. MSS. Comm. Reports, app. xiv, pt. iv, p. 573.

² *D. S. P., Chas. I*, cxxxix. 24. See Chapter VII.

Life of Marmaduke Rawdon (Camden Soc. publications), p. 121.

³ Price, *Leeds and its Neighbourhood*, p. 198.

ever ready to explore new fields. In 1589 he was in negotiation with Sir Francis Willoughby of Wollaton Hall, near Nottingham at a time when the latter was engaged in certain fancy-cloth-making ventures. In a letter Tenche undertook

'the dyeing of Sir Francis Willoughby's wool, and the spinning dyeing, and working of Arres work of all sorts, which he is emboldened to do, more especially as he has found out a workman or two who will join with him or be under him, who will work any work that shall be set unto them by a painter in colours, and to work the same in woollen yarn . . ., or in silk or in silver or gold or altogether.'

For proof thereof Tenche was willing to visit Wollaton Hall 'and Sir Francis shall draw a little carpet or cushion in what colour shall be thought fittest for the same; and Tenche will work it to the satisfaction of the worthy gentleman before the contract be finally made. Tenche's work seems to have satisfied Sir Francis, who was quite willing to pay him £50 per annum as well as the desired wages to his workmen, 6s. 8d. per week. The two began to draw up various plans for dyeing and weaving these fancy wares, but nothing is known of the subsequent history of the scheme.¹

In his own county Tenche was chiefly famous as an orthodox upholder of the law. In 1590 he wrote to the President of the Council of the North of York, 'with the full consent of all other clothiers in the North partes', complaining that 'by reason of a corrupt practise of a great number of broggers, engrocers, wool-gatherars, regratours and such like', all the wool of the county had been snatched up, and could only be obtained by clothiers at 'prisses . . . exceedingly enhaunsed and increased'.² In view of this lamentable state of affairs, he pleaded for a vigorous enforcement of the law against middlemen in the wool trade. In the same year he was appointed, on the nomination of the Privy Council, to check evil practices in the making of West Riding cloths.³ The letter from the Privy Council to the President of the Council of the North was most flattering to Tenche. After stating the evil practice to be dealt with, it declared that 'forasmuch as this fraude . . . will best be suppressed by

¹ Letter in Middleton MSS. (*Hist. MSS. Comm.*), pp. 498-9, April 4, 1589.

² Acts and Ordinances of the Privy Council, May 28, 1590, xix. 169.

³ *Ibid.*, December 24, 1590, xx. 103.

in 'authorising of some honest and discrete personnes for the correcting of the said abuses', the President 'is prai'd to license Randall Tenche, a man of honest conversation and good skill and experience in such cases, together with one or two more to see him', to take all possible steps to root out the fraud. At a later date he was entrusted with the task of enforcing another law¹ concerning the true making of cloth, and had power to seize all pieces which did not conform to legal demands. When Randall discharged his duties with customary thoroughness, in fact, so energetic was he that he brought upon his head the angry complaints of many of his victims, who appealed against him to the Quarter Sessions at Wakefield, 1598. Hence the order of the Court:

'Whereas this Court is informed that Randall Tenche and others the Searchers of Laedes have seized many clothes of dyvers personnes, who desire of this Court that the Searchers may be called in, and shewe cause why they dyd the same: yt is therefore ordered that a warrant shalbe made against them to appeare att the next Sessions and answeare for the premisses.'²

Apart from these facts, little seems to be known of this interesting figure. He was evidently of some importance in the religious life of the town, and acted as churchwarden at the parish church in 1591.³ His home was situated in the Tenters,⁴ a lands by the river side near the church, and here he had his birth and tenter close.⁵ One of his sons was buried in the parish church,⁶ and Randall himself died in the last days of the year 1628.⁷ His name has sunk into oblivion, for, though he was a stalwart pillar of Church and State, he did not endow any churches or almshouses.

(b) Apprenticeship

As we have seen, apprenticeship was an important part of the guild system, and aimed at maintaining the standard of

¹ 30 Eliz., c. 20.

² *Quarter Sessions Records*, 1598, Yorks. Arch. Soc., Record Series, iii. 141.

³ *Leeds Parish Church Registers*, Thoresby Soc. publications, i. 269.

⁴ Entries in register always read 'Randall Tenche of the Tenters', e.g. Thoresby Soc., iii. 316.

⁵ *Survey of the Manor of Leeds*, 1610, Thoresby Soc., xi. 411.

⁶ Thoresby Soc., ii. 41.

⁷ Burial Register, Leeds Parish Church, 1628-9: 'Jan. 1st, Randall Tenche of the Tenters', Thoresby Soc., iii. 316.

workmanship by demanding that every man, before becoming an independent master, should have received a thorough training during a long period of service under the guidance of some competent master. Apprenticeship had become systematized under the old local control, and entry into it hedged about with many formalities and restrictions. As the effectiveness of local industrial regulation declined, national supervision became more necessary. An Apprenticeship Law had been passed in the reign of Henry IV, but its effect was rather to injure the towns than to regulate the country industry.¹ The expansion of the textile industry in the new centres during the next hundred years was accompanied by a comparative neglect of formal industrial training. The State had not yet evolved its elaborate code of economic law, and so cloth-makers were virtually free to act according to their individual desires. In Yorkshire, as elsewhere, men took up the manufacture of cloth without having undergone any lengthy period of apprenticeship. Hence, in the sixteenth century, many complaints were made concerning the 'multitude of clothiers lately increased in the realme', since 'every man that wolde had libertie to be a clothier'; and it was urged that laws should be made to ensure that 'none shoulde meddle with clothmaking, but such as had been prentises to th'occupacion'.² Various enactments³ eventually brought apprenticeship under legal control, but the North Country was exempted from their scope until the great Act of 1563,⁴ which surveyed the whole field of relationships between master and man.

This Act spread its tentacles over town and country alike. The enforcement of apprenticeship, and the maintenance of high freehold qualifications for apprentices, marked all the clauses concerning training for work. Merchants, mercers, drapers, and 'clothiers that put cloth to making or sale' were forbidden to take any apprentice unless the youth was their own son or the child of a 'forty shilling freeholder'. The forty-shilling qualifica-

¹ See Cunningham, *op. cit.*, i. 449. Also Statute, 7 Hen. IV, c. 17.

² Ordinances of the Privy Council, 1550, vol. iii, p. 19.

³ e.g. 2 & 3 Philip and Mary, c. 11.

⁴ 5 Eliz., c. 4. This Act exempted the makers of the coarsest wares of Cumberland, Westmoreland, Lancashire, and Wales, i.e. friezes, cottons, and 'huswives' cloth.

tion applied only to those living in corporate towns or cities, such as York and Beverley: in market towns and rural districts the freehold was to be of the annual value of £3. The local magistrates were to see that this clause was enforced, and all indentures of apprenticeship had to be duly registered and endorsed by them. The Act also reiterated the demand for a training period of at least seven years, and in order to guarantee that all workers, whether employer or employee, should be properly skilled, laid down the following rule:

'It shall not be lawfull for any person to sett up, occupy, use, or exercise any craft, mistery, or occupation . . . except he shall have been brought up therein seven yeares at the least as an apprentice, nor to set any person on work in such occupation . . . except he shall have been apprenticed as is aforesaid.'

The penalty for infringement of this clause was 40s. for every month the offender had worked at the trade.

The Act applied to all existing industries, and the Quarter Sessions records, both of the North and West Riding,¹ show that none of the clauses of the statute were enforced, especially that demanding a seven years' apprenticeship. Instances similar to the following are numerous:

Malton, Jan. 12th, 1607. 'Thomas Cooke, . . . webster, for trading, having never served vij years' apprentice.'²

Pontefract, April 1647. 'George Copley of Skelmanthorpe, did for the space of eleven whole months occupy . . . the art, mistery, and manual occupation of a weaver making woollen cloth, in which said art, mistery or occupation he had not been educated or apprenticed for the space of seven years.' He was therefore fined in accordance with the provisions of the statute, £2 per month, or £22 for his eleven months of illicit industry.³

Wakefield, Jan. 1648. Elizabeth Wayte of Thorne, mercer, for carrying on the trade of a mercer for ten months without having previously served the necessary apprenticeship. Elizabeth had incurred the enmity of a neighbouring mercer, who, being legally qualified, had informed the authorities of Elizabeth's misdemeanour, and in return received half of the £20 fine imposed upon the offender.⁴

¹ *West Riding Quarter Sessions Rolls, 1597-1602*, ed. by J. Lister.

² *North Riding Q. S. Records* (ed. Atkinson), i. 121.

³ *West Riding Quarter Sessions Rolls, Indictment Book B, April 27, 23 Chas. I.*

⁴ *Indictment Book B, Wakefield Quarter Sessions, Jan., 23 Chas. I.*

Thirsk, 1681. A Hewby yeoman indicted for using the trade of a weaver without having been properly apprenticed.¹

The master took his own son as apprentice, or accepted the lad of some neighbour or friend. In addition to this, he was liable to receive forced gifts of apprentices from the poor law authorities. The poor relief system of the seventeenth century made provision for the employment of pauper children in some school or workhouse, or for them to be placed out in the hands of a clothier or other ratepayer. Thus the clothier was destined, sooner or later, to have an apprentice thrust upon him by the churchwardens and overseers of the poor. It was wellnigh impossible for him to refuse the child, and the following entries indicate some of the attempts made to wriggle out of the obligation:

Skipton Quarter Sessions, July 1638. 'Upon Informacon given unto this Corte by the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poore in the parishe of Kighley that one Robert Cloughe of that parishe refuseth to take his apprentice, beinge legally tendred unto him, Itt is ordered that the saide Robert Cloughe shall take the said poore child apprentice, if he have not a scald head, or els be taken bounde to answeare his contempt before His Majestie's Judges of Assize at the next Assizes.'²

At the same Court, 'Thomas Backhouse doth wilfully refuse to take . . . a poore child putt apprentice to him. Ordered that the apprentice shallbe confirmed to him, and that he shallbe taken bounde to answeare his contempte at the next Sessions, . . . and that he shall pay and satisfie the chardges that the parishe hath beene putt for providing and maintaining the saide poore child since he was tendred unto him.'³

During the seven years of apprenticeship, the lad was entirely under the control of his master, especially if provided with board and lodging. Any attempt to abscond could be severely punished,⁴ and should the master be seriously dissatisfied with the pupil he might lay his case before the magistrates, who were empowered to 'cause such due correction and punishment to be ministered to him as by their wisdom and discretion shallbe thought meet'.⁵ This might mean a flogging, expulsion from

¹ *North Riding Q. S. Records*, vol. vii, p. 53.

² *West Riding Quarter Sessions, Order Book A, July 1638.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ April 5, 1608, *North Riding Records*. Man indicted for enticing John Smith, apprentice, to leave his master.

⁵ 5 Eliz., c. 4.

the service of the master, or a period of incarceration in the 'Soleitary Cells' which were provided in the Wakefield House of Correction for 'the purpose of confining unruly apprentices, vagrants, etc.'¹ The parish apprentice was occasionally a burden to his master, who missed no opportunity of ridding himself of useless pupils. Thus, in 1639, a clothier of the Halifax parish complained to Quarter Sessions that a parish apprentice, given him three years before, was 'a Lunatique and a Caytiff, and not fitt to doe him any service',² and in the following year a Bradford clothier declared that the apprentice placed with him was 'blynde, and utterly disabled and unfitt for service'.³ In such cases the applicant was released from this useless charge, and another parish child given him. On the other hand, the apprentice was not without a measure of protection. His master was not supposed to ill-treat or neglect him, under pain of the lad's removal; and if the master became bankrupt, or was manifestly not discharging his obligations to the youth, the apprentice was liberated by the justices, and could seek for a new master elsewhere. Witness the following quaint order of the Pontefract Quarter Sessions, April 1638:

'Whereas Thomas Farrey hath beene bounde apprentice to one Matthew Usher of Wakefield, . . . to the trade of a mercer; now forasmuche as the said Usher is decayed in his Estate, and given over his Trade, and lyen two years in the King's bench, and his wife lives by brewing or Tipling of Ale, and hath not employed or assigned the said Farrey to any person of that trade, but forceth him to live idly and fill Ale, and loose his tyme and trade',⁴

therefore the lad was freed from bondage, and allowed to seek a master of better repute.

As we examine the system of apprenticeship in the light of

¹ Order Book of Quarter Sessions, quoted by J. Horsfall Turner, *Wakefield House of Correction*, p. 122.

² Quarter Sessions, Order Book A, 3rd October, 14 Chas. I (Halifax Sessions).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 15, 1st October, 15 Chas. I.

⁴ *Ibid.*, April 1638. Similar one in North Riding Records: 'Whereas Thos. Pant, apprentice to Christopher Simpson, of Egton, shoemaker, complains that he has not been employed in his occupation, . . . but hath been trayned up these three yerres in wandering the country and playing Interludes, and for the said Simpson is an obstinate convicted Popish recusant, . . . and warrants are issued for his apprehension, . . . the said Pant shalbe free of his apprenticeship' (North Riding Sessions, 1610, vol. i, p. 204).

the Act of 1563, the questions inevitably arise--Did it work? Did it achieve its aims? Was it a permanent part and parcel of the industrial organization? To these queries it is difficult to give a comprehensive answer. In the mind of the clothier there were two interpretations of the term 'Apprenticeship'. The first was that it was essential for future masters to be thoroughly trained, and this could be best effected by a course of tuition, the duration of which had been settled by custom at seven years. Secondly, there was the legally ordained apprenticeship, hedged in with freehold qualifications, attestations of local magistrates, &c., as demanded by the Elizabethan Act. The first of these views was generally admitted, and to some extent enforced by the local courts. But even here it is difficult to believe that all fulfilled the term of seven years. Such a period was far more than sufficient for acquiring proficiency in the various processes, especially since the average Yorkshire cloth was not a 'super-fine', and would not require very great skill or delicate workmanship. Hence it is very probable that apprenticeship was regarded by many as a matter rather of industrial convenience than of legal necessity, and that the West Riding justices of the peace were speaking of a practice common in the textile industry when, in 1604, they complained of the 'unskillfull persons that daileye sett upp trades and misteries in those thinges wherein they were never lawfull apprentices'.¹

As to the observance of the 'freehold' and other clauses of the Act, we have the answer to our query in a confession made in 1640 by the Yorkshire weavers themselves. It appears that some men had been perusing the Act, and had seen the possibility of making money by informing the authorities of the manner in which various clauses were being disregarded by the clothiers.² The latter were up in arms at once, and dispatched to the King 'The humble petition of the poore Clothiers of Leedes, Hallifax, and other the Clothing Townes in the Countie of Yorke'. In the petition they cited the clauses which were the cause of the trouble, namely, 'that no Clothier shall take any apprentice but hee whose father hath 40s. of ffreehold

¹ Complaint of justices of Agbrigg and Morley wapentakes to constables of those parts. Printed in *Old Yorkshire*, vol. ii, pp. 41-2.

² The informer was the bane of life in some parts, but the fear of his activities did not deter the clothiers from straining the law.

estate of Inheritance, to be certified under the hands of three Justices of the Peace, . . . and also for everie three apprentices to keep one Journeyman, and these upon pain of severall great penalties'. These clauses, the petitioners candidly confessed, were 'never observed nor put in execution in ye said Countie of Yorke, nor can be observed, for many wise reasons'. The clothiers therefore asked that the clauses be repealed, and also sought grace and pardon for those clothiers who were to be brought before the next Assizes for offences against them. A sentence imposed upon these men would 'tende to their utter undoeing, if some remedie be not speedily had, *there being not one Clothier in ye Countie but is guiltie of ye Penalties of ye said Statute*'¹

(c) *The Journeyman*

The extent to which journeymen were employed depended largely upon the scale of the clothier's business. It is very doubtful if any of the smaller men employed any male adult labour, but in the case of the larger clothiers and the cloth-finishing trades considerable numbers of journeymen were engaged. The journeyman's position was carefully regulated by the Act of 1563. Any clothier who had three apprentices must employ one journeyman, with an additional one for every further apprentice; but in practice this rule was disregarded, and the Yorkshire clothier made the matter one of personal option, utilizing the services of apprentices or journeymen as best suited his purpose. The employee was required by law to have first completed a seven years' term of apprenticeship, and in many cases looked forward to the day when, having saved sufficient money, he would be able to become a clothier himself. He was to be employed for not less than one year, and could neither leave nor be dismissed before the end of that period. His hours of labour were fixed by the Act of 1563; from March to September he was expected to work from 5 a.m. to 7 or 8 p.m., with not more than 2½ hours interval for meals and after-dinner sleep; from September to March he must work 'from the spring of the day in the morning until the night of the same day', upon pain of losing a penny for each hour's absence. These hours were not strictly observed, except possibly by those who

¹ D. S. P., Chas. I, cccclx. 64.

worked under the employer's roof. Dyers, fullers, shearers, and apprentices carried on their occupation under the direct supervision of their employer, and to them the legal hours of labour might apply. But a great proportion of journeymen weavers worked in their own homes, and were in consequence free to work or idle when they pleased. These men often owned their own tools, but occasionally the employer provided the necessary implements.

The supply of male adult labour was strongly supplemented by the employment of women and children. In 1588, one loom consumed the yarn carded and spun by five or six persons, and most of the work of preparing yarn for the weaver was performed by women and young persons. Every cottage had its spinning-wheel or distaff, as an almost essential part of the domestic equipment. The clothier sent his wool out to the spinners, who, in their homes, spun the mass of raw material into fibre ready for the loom.

The technique in the various textile processes was primitive, and the number of cloths produced appears very small in relation to the number of persons engaged, and the time and energy expended. From a document dated 1588¹ we gather some idea of the distribution of labour in the industry, and the speed at which cloths were produced. The document gives details for the manufacture of broad cloths (as in Leeds), and for that of kerseys (as in the Halifax area).

In the making of short broad cloths or dozens (12 yds. by 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ yds.), sixty workers were distributed as follows :

Persons.

Sorting, dressing, and dyeing the wool	12	
Spinning and carding	30	
Weaving and shearing	12	of whom four were probably shear-men.
Odd jobs, taking wool to spinners, and cloth to fulling mill	6	

This labour force in the course of a week worked 12 stones of wool up into four 'dozens': in other words, fifteen persons were employed for a week in producing a cloth 12 yds. by 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ yds. Such a piece was too wide to be woven by a single weaver, and

¹ *Kenyon MSS., Hist. MSS. Comm. Report*, app. xiv, pt. iv, p. 573.

the broad loom therefore occupied the attention of two workmen, who utilized the yarn prepared by three sorters, dressers, and dyers, and seven or eight carders and spinners.

In the kersey trade the distribution was a little different, and the sixty workers would be employed as follows :

	<i>Persons.</i>				
Sorting and dressing	.	.	.	6	
Spinning and carding	.	.	.	40	
Weaving	.	.	.	8	
Shearmen	.	.	.	6	of whom two were to help the rest of the workers.

Kerseys were usually sold 'in the white', and so the list made no provision for dyers. The forty spinners could prepare 20 stones of yarn in a week, and this made 10 kerseys (18 yds. by 1 yd.). Thus one kersey occupied six workers for a week. The kersey, being a narrow cloth, could be woven by one weaver, who apparently made 1½ cloths per week, utilizing the yarn carded and spun by five persons.

The apparent slowness of production was due to many causes. The actual process of weaving occupied many days, by reason of the crude method of passing the shuttle across the warp. But before and after making the cloth many things had to be done which took up much time. First came the journey from the weaver's home to the clothier's head-quarters, to get the supply of yarn. Then, when the yarn had been brought home, that part of it which was intended for the warp had to be spread out, wound to the back 'beam' or roller, placed in the loom, threaded through the healds or heddles which were to raise and lower the warp threads in alternate series, and finally, after being fully adjusted in the loom mechanism, fastened to the front beam, on which the cloth itself was to be rolled. These processes all required time, care, and patience, as any error in the arrangement of the warp would cause trouble in the course of the weaving. The weaving was liable to be interrupted by a scarcity of yarn for the shuttle. Finally, the fulling, tentering, and drying were slow processes, as the Yorkshire climate was not suitable for the rapid drying of cloths. Thus, when one takes into account the primitive methods of manufacture, the

passing of materials from hand to hand,¹ and the climatic difficulties, it is not surprising that a single cloth should represent so great an outlay of time and energy.

The wages of the textile workers were regulated by the justices of the peace, in accordance with the Acts of 1563 and 1603. The Elizabethan statute had been confined in its practical application almost entirely to agricultural labour and the building trades, and there was some doubt whether it was really intended to deal with the textile trades. In 1603, however, it was declared that the Act of 1563 had 'been found beneficiall for the commonwealth', and its bounds were therefore more carefully defined. The justices were now given instructions 'to rate the wages of any labourers, weavers, spinsters, and workmen or workwomen whatsoever, either working by the day, week, month, year, or taking any work at any person's hands . . . to be done in great or otherwise'.² These assessments were intended to state minimum wage figures for textile workers, and any clothiers who refused to obey the commands of the magistrates, or pay as great wages to their weavers and spinsters as should be ordained in the assessment, were to be fined ten shillings for each offence. The weaver was not to be underpaid, if the State could prevent it. Further, in order to exclude the employers' influence when assessments were being made, it was ordered that no justice who was a clothier by trade should be allowed to assist in the fixing of wages for textile workers.

The new Act was not at first administered with any enthusiasm in the West Riding. The chief and petty constables were apathetic in declaring the assessment which had been drawn up, and in searching for offenders. This negligence roused the ire of some of the more conscientious magistrates, and in November 1604 three of them expressed their severe condemnation of 'the many complaints arisinge betwixt masters and servants . . . through the negligence of the Chief and Petty Constables, and the masters and the men who do not obey the law as they ought to do'. The constables were therefore ordered to rouse themselves, and bring to justice all masters and men who should continue to disregard the law.³

¹ See Pawson's inventory quoted above; amount of wool 'yarne att spynners'.

² Statute, 1 Jas. I, c. 6, amending and extending 5 Eliz., c. 4.

³ Document quoted in *Old Yorkshire*, vol. ii, pp. 41-2.

To what extent this order was obeyed, and subsequent assessments drawn up during the next forty years, it is impossible to state,¹ but it is certain that wages lists were actually framed during the reigns of James I and Charles I. In 1641, for instance, an assessment was issued, and the constables were ordered to make its provisions known to all concerned. Six months later it became apparent that the rates fixed by the justices were being disregarded, and at the Doncaster Sessions there was a general complaint 'that servants refuse to worke for reasonable wages, and cannot be hired for competent allowance as formerlye, makeing advantage of the much busines of the times'. The magistrates therefore, 'takeing into consideracon the many inconveniences that now doe and are like to arise therby if some speedy course be not taken herein', ordered the constables to make a full and thorough proclamation of the rates fixed, and of the penalties for disobedience, after which they were to bring for punishment all such persons as they found 'refractorye in not observing thereof, either master or servant'.

During the years which followed, the West Riding was too much distracted by plague and civil war to give any attention to the matter of wages. But when some measure of peace had been restored the justices returned to the question, and at the Pontefract Sessions, April 1647, they drew up a comprehensive assessment. This document is the first of such assessments accessible, but is doubtless very similar in form and figures to its predecessors of the earlier years of the century. The assessment touched all the West Riding industries—agriculture, building trades, tailoring, mining, and textile work. The clause relating to textile work ran as follows:

'Cloathworkers and Dyers.

Noe Weaver, Cloathworker, Shereman or Dyer Shall not take for his wages above *iiij^d* with meat and Drinke, and without meate and Drinke *viiij^d*. And if hee be hyred by the yeare, and if hee bee a very Skilfull workman in these Sciences, hee shall have *iiij^{li}* per annum. And other comon weavers, Cloath-

¹ This is due to the fact that the Quarter Sessions Records, prior to 1639, are not accessible. After that date the records are continuous, being in the custody of the Clerk of the Peace at Wakefield. Some of the Elizabethan Sessions Records have been edited by Mr. John Lister, and published by the Yorks. Arch. and Topogr. Soc. (vol. iii), and another volume is now in course of preparation.

workers, Shearemen, fullers and Dyers shall not have for their wages above ij^l. x^s. yeareley.¹

There are many points to be noted in this short clause. The first is that the assessment laid down a maximum figure for the wages of the employee, and consequently any master paying more than this amount was liable to a severe fine, as was also the man who accepted an excessive wage. This feature runs throughout the whole of this and other wages assessments. 'Shall not take above' is the ever-recurring phrase, the keynote of the proclamation. In no case was a minimum wage stated, and apparently the master might pay as little as he pleased; the justices were only concerned to see that he did not pay too much. This was contrary to the spirit of the Act of 1603, which presupposed the fixing of a minimum rate for textile workers, and, as quoted above, stated the penalty to be inflicted on those clothiers who did not pay to their workpeople 'so much or so great wages' as were ordered by the local magistrates.² But in practice the assessments were confined solely to establishing maximum rates, and all cases of punishment under the Act were those of masters who had paid, and servants who had accepted, higher wages than were allowed by the assessment.³ The orders given to the constables in 1641 show clearly the attitude of the justices, and there can be no doubt that the real motive in their minds when issuing any assessment was to prevent workpeople from taking advantage of any temporary or permanent scarcity of labour to extract increased wages.

Secondly, it is somewhat surprising to find all classes of cloth-makers placed in the same group, with one rate for all, and that rate a time rate, eightpence a day. For those engaged in dyeing, cloth-dressing, fulling, and shearing, a time rate would be natural, for their work was of such a kind that it

¹ Doncaster Quarter Sessions, October 1641. Sessions Order Book A, f. 186. 'A proclamation of the Rates and appointment of the Severall wages for Artificers, handycraftsmen, husbandmen, Laborers, Servants, Workemen and Apprentices of husbandry within the Westriding of the Co. of Yorke, &c.' (Pontefract Quarter Sessions, April 27, 1647, Order Book C, p. 10). See article by present writer in *Economic Journal*, June 1914.

² 1 Jas. I, c. 6.

³ See, for instance, the numerous offences brought before the North Riding J.P.'s, *North Riding Q. S. Records*, vol. vii, pp. 34, 45-7, &c.

could be difficult to pay a man according to the amount of work done. Similarly, for those weavers who lived and worked with their master, and devoted their whole time to weaving in his loomshop, a time rate might be satisfactory. But a large part of the weaving was performed by men who, though employed by a clothier, carried on their occupation in their own homes. These men were also in possession of a piece of ground, and combined the cultivation of their patch of land with their work at the loom. At times they had to wait for further supplies of yarn, and these intervals were doubtless filled up with agricultural work on a small scale. In these circumstances, one would have supposed that the justices would have stated a piece rate, and limited the amount which could be paid for the weaving of each piece. In actual practice the piece rate was general, and it is probable therefore that the assessment figures bore some relation to the amount which a weaver could earn when paid by the piece.

A third point of interest lies in the comparison of the rates paid to industry and agriculture. The most important maxima noted in the 1647 assessment were :

<i>Agriculture.</i>	<i>Maximum Wages.</i>
Bailiffs or foremen hired by gentlemen or wealthy persons per annum	£3 10s. 0d. ¹
Male servants in the employ of ordinary yeomen or husbandmen	£3 0s. 0d.
Female servants	25s. to 30s.
Mowers of grass and corn, per day, with or without food	5d. or 10d.
Ordinary farm labourers, per day, with or without food	{ Summer, 3d. or 6d. { Winter, 2d. or 5d.
<i>Building Trades.</i>	
Master masons and carpenters	6d. or 12d.
Labourers	{ Summer, 4d. or 8d. { Winter, 3d. or 6d.
Plumbers, glaziers, bricklayers, slaters, tylers, and others engaged in branches of building	{ Summer, 4d. or 9d. { Winter, 3d. or 8d.
<i>Miners.</i>	
Colliers, per day, without meat or drink	10d.
Banksmen or drawers-up of coal, without sustenance	8d.
<i>Clothworkers.</i>	
All classes, per day	4d. or 8d.
If engaged for year, presumably with meat and drink	{ Skilful, £3 { Common, £2 10s. 0d.
Dyers, with meat and drink	2d. to 4d.

¹ In addition the bailiff received a livery or 10s. per annum in lieu thereof.
² The large sums denote the maximum annual rates, and include food and probably lodging.

From these figures it will be seen that textile workers were not the most highly paid in the county. The 'very skillfull' weaver or fuller was to receive less than the skillful collier, less than the higher grades of farm servants, less than the heads of the building trade, less even than the mower of grass or corn. The superiority of mining wages over textile rates, which has lasted up to the present day, was probably due to the presence of a strong female element in the textile trade. The weaver was not the sole bread-winner of the family; his wife, and children over four or five years of age, were all potential wage-earners, a fact which would help to keep the male adult's earnings lower than might otherwise have been the case. The weaver was paid less than the harvest workers, and this had the effect of drawing large numbers of the industrial population to the agricultural areas in harvest time. The weaver laid aside his shuttle, and, often accompanied by his family, went eastward to the Vale of York and the East Riding to assist in mowing and reaping. This annual excursion served as a summer holiday, a holiday for which the weaver was paid more than he could earn by working at the loom.

A comparison of the West Riding rates with those established in other counties shows that the Yorkshire textile workers were allowed quite as good wages as their fellows in East Anglia, and better wages than those assessed in the West of England.

County.	Best Weaver.	Common Weaver.	Fullers, Dyers, Shearmen. B.L.	Others.
Yorks. W.R.	£3	£2 10s.	£3	£2 10s.
Essex (1651) ¹	£3 and livery	£1 10s. and livery	£2 10s. and livery	
Suffolk (1630) ²	£3 and livery	£2 and livery	£3	£2 10s. and livery
Norfolk (1610) ³	£2 and livery	£1 13s. 4d. and livery	£2 and livery	
Wilts. (1604) ⁴	£2 and livery	£1 6s. 8d.	Dyers £2 10s.	£2
Devon (1654) ⁵	2½d. or 8d. per day.		Shearmen Fuller { £2	£1 6s. 8d.

Turning from these assessments to the actual wages which were being paid to workers in wool, we are faced with a scarcity

¹ Thorold Rogers, *Hist. of Agriculture and Prices*, vi. 694-7.

² *English Historical Review*, xii. 307-11.

³ *Ibid.*, xiii. 523-7.

⁴ Bland, Brown, and Tawney, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

⁵ Hamilton, *Quarter Sessions from Queen Elizabeth to Queen Anne* (1878), pp. 163-4.

of data. Thorold Rogers gives no figures for the West Riding industry, but a few facts are available from the evidence given in the clothiers' lawsuits of 1638 and 1676, and from one or two other sources. In 1638 the weaver would be under an assessment similar to the one already quoted, and his maximum wage would not be greater than that stated in 1647, namely, fourpence with, and eightpence without, food and drink. In practice the weaver was paid by the piece, receiving a certain amount for each cloth worked. This payment in 1588 amounted to 1s. 8d. for each kersey,¹ and in the Leeds area 3s. 4d. was paid for the weaving of a 'dozen'. These rates had scarcely changed by 1638.² As seen above, a weaver was able to produce about 1½ kerseys in a week, and statements were made in the lawsuit of 1638 to the effect that one kersey was the weekly output of the average weaver. At the most, therefore, his weekly earnings would be 2s. 1d., or less than 5d. a day. The weaving of a 'dozen' occupied the attention of two workers for a week, who for their joint labour received 3s. 4d. If this had to be shared equally between the two, the weekly wage of each was a beggarly 1s. 8d., the same amount as was received by the kersey weavers who only produced one cloth in a week. It was, however, a common practice to set an apprentice to assist a journeyman in weaving broad cloths, in which case the journeyman's share of the 3s. 4d. might amount to about 2s. 6d., an average of 5d. per day. This was the rate in 1588, and in 1676³ the earnings seem to have been about the same. According to one of the witnesses giving evidence in the trial of that year, 'weavers of cloth can hardly earne fivepence a day . . . and find themselves meate, though they be stronge and able to worke'. Another man stated that the daily earnings were 6d., and a third declared that 'the wages of a Clothier⁴ for weaveing of cloth is but three pence a day besides meate', which may be taken as equivalent to at most 6d. per day. Thus the average daily earnings of the weaver in the seventeenth century were less than 6d., and therefore well below the maximum fixed by the

Kenyon MSS., *Hist. Comm. Report*, app. xiv, pt. iv, p. 573.

Exchequer Depositions by Commission, 14 Chas. I, Mich. 21, York.

Ibid., 28 Chas. II, Mich. 29, York and Lancaster.

The word 'clothier' is used here in a vague sense, and really means the employee weaver.

assessment of 1647. It was not until the eighteenth century that the weaver's remuneration crept up to the 7s. or 9s. per week which was paid in the days of Arthur Young.

The spinners, whose wages were untouched by the assessment, were very badly paid, and here again the wages of 1588 were almost the same as those of a century later. Payment was by piece, and the spinner received from 1s. 8d. to 2s. 8d. per stone, according to the quality of the wool and the standard of the spinning. It took a skilful worker about a fortnight to spin a stone of wool, and so the earnings of spinners varied from 2d. to 4d. per day,¹ the lower rates generally going to children and young women, or to adult women in the badly paid areas. As one witness declared in 1638, 'A spinner may earn, some twopence, some threepence, and the strongest a groat (fourpence), and none usually earne more by spinninge for and towards meat and drink and wages'. A fellow-witness confirmed this statement by declaring that 'the ordinary rate of a stone of wool spinninge is eight groat (2s. 8d.), and a good spinner cannot ordinarily earne above threepence a day towards meat, dr'ak, and wages, and the most spinners adde (i. e. earn) but twopence a day in the parish of Kighley'. In 1676 these rates had diminished rather than increased. Witnesses declared that 'spinners can scarce earne threepence a day, findinge themselves with meat', 'a very good spinner can scarcely earne twopence a day, they finding themselves with meate, a pound of wool a day beinge as much as an ordinary person can carde and spinne'. Others estimated the general wages at fourpence for the best workers, whilst one man declared that in his district (Lockwood) 'the wadges for spinninge is not above one penny a day besides meate'.

In taking stock of these figures we must remember the relatively larger purchasing power of money, and make allowance accordingly. But it is also necessary to emphasize the fact that between 1588 and 1676, the period when weavers' and spinners' wages were stationary, there was a very great increase in general prices. This was due in part to the debasement of the coinage in the early decades of the sixteenth century, and also to the influx of silver from the mines of South America, which began

¹ The same scale of wages for spinners prevailed in Wiltshire, 1605. See Bland, Brown, and Tawney, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

to affect English prices about 1570. It is impossible to state with any measure of accuracy the extent of the movement, but one is safely within bounds in stating that prices doubled in the century which followed 1570.¹ The effect of this increase on the wage-earner must have been very serious. True, he would be independent of market supplies of foodstuffs in so far as he added agriculture and the rearing of stock to his industrial pursuits. There would be the eggs from the poultry, the milk from the cow (if the weaver were fortunate enough to possess one), and the slices of ham or bacon from last year's pig. But the supply of cereals would have to be purchased from elsewhere, especially by those who lived in the barren districts of the Pennine slopes, and the rise in the price of wheat, oats, and rice would have a very serious effect upon the purchasing power of the weekly wage. Hence, whilst recognizing the big expansion of the industry and admitting that many clothiers were finding their way to riches, we are forced to the conclusion that the poorer classes of the county lived on the poverty line, and that the vision of a Merrie England is dimmed when we see at closer quarters the economic vicissitudes and general industrial conditions of Tudor England. Profound shocks had been experienced in every branch of national life, and in such upheavals it is usually the poor who feel the blow first and are the last to recover. In addition to the rise in prices, there was the dissolution of the monasteries, the enclosure movement, and the constant drain of men and money for wars in Scotland and elsewhere. In 1558 the Earl of Shrewsbury wrote of Yorkshire that 'the state of the shyre was poore . . . by reason of the greate chardge they have bene at since the begynnyng of these last warres about the furnyture of bothe horsemen and footmen to the Borders'.² Half a century later matters had not improved, and Thomas, Lord Burghley, writing from York, exclaimed to a correspondent, 'You will not think to what povertye this country (Yorkshire) is growne into at this present. . . . I pray God sends us peace, or els I dare assure you it wyll brede grete discontent in these Northe partes, where they say there is nothyng dayly but payinge and punishyng'.³

¹ On the question of prices, see Cunningham, *Growth*, ii. 162-70; L. L. Price, *Money, and its Relation to Prices*, chap. iii.

² D. S. P., *Mary*, Addenda, viii. 87.

³ D. S. P., *Eliz.*, cclxxxi. 28.

d) The Wool Supply and the Middleman

Had we asked the Elizabethan clothier which aspect of his work gave him the most cause for anxiety, he would probably have replied, 'The obtaining of my raw material'.

There was a great diversity of wools throughout the kingdom, in quality, nature, and price. Some wools were naturally suited for particular classes of cloths, and the wool grown in one county was frequently worthless to clothiers of that district, but met the demands of some county which lay at the other end of the land. This caused the rise of a considerable trade in the transit of wools. The sheep of Yorkshire could not supply all the needs of the Yorkshire clothiers. The quantity was inadequate, and for many purposes the quality was not sufficiently good. For this reason, the native wool of the West Riding was largely handed over to the makers of the very coarsest cloths, whilst the clothiers drew their supplies from other counties. A paper dated 1615¹ states that the wool of Lincolnshire, Rutland, Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire was carried to Leeds, Wakefield, Halifax, and Rochdale; and from an earlier source (1588) we learn that 'the Hallyfaxe men occupie fyne wolle most out of Lincolnshire, and there corse wolle they sell to men of Ratchedall'.² Thus there was a well-developed system of internal trade in wool, and Yorkshire drew its supplies from many of the most famous wool-producing counties of that period.

This transference of wool was carried on in many ways. The wealthy clothier went himself, or sent his assistants, into the wool counties, and made his purchases either at the wool fair or in the parlour of the wool-grower. The witnesses in the lawsuits of the seventeenth century³ declared that they often journeyed into the wool areas of Lincolnshire and Leicestershire to purchase their supplies. We have an excellent instance of such direct purchase during the early part of the same century in the case of John Priestley, who lived in London, and made a practice of riding out into Kent and the surrounding country to buy wool from the growers. He then packed up the fleeces

¹ *D. S. P., Jas. I, lxxx, 13.*

Kenyon MSS., Hist. MSS. Comm. Report, xiv, pt. iv, p. 573

² Depositions in lawsuit *re* subsidy and ulnage, 1638 (see Chapter VI).

and brought or sent them north to his brothers, who lived and worked as clothiers at Soyland, near Halifax.¹ Similarly, the Leeds clothier² saddled his horse and rode out to the country fairs at Ripon, Doncaster, and Pontefract, or to the moorland farms, and there made his purchases.

But many could not afford to make these excursions, and few of the clothiers had kind-hearted brothers in the capital. The lower grades were therefore unable to buy in this direct manner. They could not afford to make big purchases, pay down large sums, or get long credit, and so lead home a team of laden pack-horses. Also, the farmer required some surer means of sale than the chance visits of prospective buyers; the wool-fair was often far distant from his own home; and lastly he preferred ready money to the notes of credit which the big clothiers might offer. Thus between wool-grower and clothier there was a distinct gap, which made exchange difficult and laborious to all but the most wealthy. The situation called for the intervention of a middleman, whose business would be to buy up the wool from the farmer, sort and classify it according to its quality, and then retail it to the clothiers in amounts to meet their needs, and in quality and fibre to answer the demands of the particular types of cloth. Such a man would bring the wools of the East and Midlands to the North, and try to meet the most varied wants of the clothiers for whom he catered.

The middleman, the woolchapman, the brogger, is a very common figure in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But the reputation of such men during this period was black, and the treatment they received at the hands of the State was very severe. They were popularly associated with all that was bad in the trading life of the day, and seem to have alienated every class by the dangerous monopoly for which they strove. Countless complaints were made against them, and they were accused of engrossing every fleece of wool in the kingdom, so that none could be obtained even in the open fairs and markets, except through their hands. The clothier found himself at their mercy, and the farmer declared that he could not sell his wool as he pleased. The sixteenth century saw a large increase in

¹ Surtees Soc. (*Priestley Memoirs*), vol. lxxvii, p. 26 et seq.

² Blome's *Britannia* states that Leeds clothiers frequented Ripon very much.

the price of wool, and the cost of a stone in 1570 was about three times the sum paid for the same amount at the beginning of the century.¹ This was really part of the general revolution in prices which marked the period, but it may be that the wool dealers had some small share in enhancing prices. Whether justly or not, they were blamed abundantly, and served as scapegoats for the various economic grievances of the times. The attitude of the public and the State towards the middleman is seen in the Act of 1552. In that year legislation took the bull by the horns:

'Whereas by the gredye and covetous myndes as well of suche as have the grete plentye and habundance of sheepe and woolles as also by the corrupt practyses of dyv'se Broggars, Ingrocers, Woolgatherars . . . and sondrie other persons, . . . it manifestlye appeareth that the prices thereof be wonderfullye and exceedynglye enhaunsed and raysed, to the grete hurte, detrimente, and decaye of the Realme';

therefore it was decreed that none should buy wools, except (1) the Merchants of the Staple of Calais, who exported it to the Continent, and the Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle, who were allowed by charter to export the cheap qualities of Northern wools; (2) the manufacturer, who intended to make it into cloth.²

This meant the annihilation of the wool-middleman, since by the above decree only direct purchases between grower and clothier were to be allowed, and the intervention of a wool-dealer was declared illegal. Such an order was also a fatal blow to the system by which the small clothier of Yorkshire was fed, and immediately the Halifax men rose in protest against the Act, seeking exemption from its scope. With powerful plea they stated their case, and the success of their agitation was seen in the Halifax Act of 1555. The preamble has already been quoted, with its picture of the clothiers' stern struggle against a barren soil, and of their trudging to market, 'ther to bye upon the Woolddryver, some a stone, some twoo, and some three or foure, accordinge to theyre habilltee, and to carrye the same', on head or back, several miles to their homes. By persistence

¹ Price per tod: 1500, 6s. 0½d.; 1570, 16s. 0d. (Thorold Rogers, *Hist. of Agriculture and Prices*, iv. 305-6)

² 5 & 6 Ed. VI, c. 7.

in this rough mode of life and work they had achieved considerable success, but were 'nowe like to bee undone and dryven to beggery, by reason of the late statute made, that takethe awaye the Woolddryver, so that they cannot nowe have their wooll by such small porcions as they were wont to have, and that thei are not hable to kepe anye horses wherupon to ryde or sett theyr wolles further from them in other places'. In consideration of this insuperable difficulty, it was enacted

'That from hensfurth, yt shalbe lawfull to any persons inhabyting within the parishe of Halyfax to buye any wooll or woolles at suche tymes as the clothiers may buy the same, otherwyse than by engrossing and forestalling, so that the persons so bying the same doo carye . . . the woolles so bought to them to the Towne of Halyfaxe, and there to sell the same to suche poore folkes of that and other parishes adjoyning as shall work the same in clothe or yarne . . . and not to the riche and welthy clothiers, nor to any one to selle agayne.'

The wooldriver who sold his wares in any other part besides Halifax, and the purchaser who sold the same again unwrought, was condemned 'to lose and forfeite the dooble value of the wooll so sold or uttered'. Thus, in the special case of Halifax, middlemen were allowed to buy wool, and bring it to the Halifax parish, for sale to the meaner clothiers only. Those who could afford the journey to the wool areas were still to make it, but the services of the wooldriver were permitted, to meet the needs of the poorer classes, whose weekly demand did not exceed one or two stones per family.¹

The Halifax Act is of further interest in that it served as a beacon light and a precedent to the rest of the North Country.² In 1577 a petition was presented from the clothiers of Lancashire, Richmondshire, Westmorland, Cumberland, and Durham, protesting against the restraint of middlemen in the wool trade. These counties put forward a very strong case, pointing out: (1) 'The clothiers (are) cotegers, whose habyltye wyll not stretch neyther to buy anye substance of wolles to mayntayne any worke or labor, not yet to fetch the wooll, the markets buyng four or five score myles away att the least.' (2) The wool

¹ 2-3 Philip and Mary, c. 13.

² Bill introduced March 5, 1562, 'to allow to buy wools in Lancaster and Yorke, to sell againe in fairs and markets' (*House of Commons Journals*, vol. 1, March 5, 1562).

was needed in small quantities only, and for coarse goods, rough 'cottons', 'frizes', &c.

The petitioners also quoted the Halifax Act, and declared that the folk of Halifax were evading it, and utilizing it to get the whole trade of wool-dealing into their hands.¹ The request of these Northern clothiers was eventually granted in 1585.²

Similarly, in 1588, Rochdale, which was really a part of the Yorkshire cloth field, complained of the proceedings which were being instituted against certain Rochdale wool-dealers, and declared 'that yf the same statute (of 1552) were executed in this countrie, where the poore clothyer is not able to go to the grower of the wooles, neyther the grower able to come hither, ther were thowsandes of poore people utterlie undone'. The Rochdale clothiers therefore asked for the same liberty 'which the men of Halyfax have'.³ Their case was espoused by the Earl of Derby, and eventually they obtained the desired freedom.⁴

Under cover of such licences, or in the face of the full rigour of the Act of 1552, the middleman continued to rule the sale of wool. In 1590 the clothiers of Leeds were feeling the inconvenience of the monopoly, and Randall Tenche headed a petition⁵ to the Council of the North, complaining 'of a corrupt practise of great number of broggers, engrocers, wool-gatherars, . . . and such like inhabiting therabouts, that have too much liberty of buieng, keeping and occupieng of wooll', and had made 'the prisses of wooles exceedingly enhaunced and increased, notwithstanding the sheepmasters and wollbreeders are nothing benefitted therby'. For remedy of this evil, Randall asked the Privy Council to grant that the statute of 1552 might 'be proclaymed and read in open markets and like places and assemblies . . . and that diligent inquiry bee made after all such broggers, etc.', getting the names of all men engaged in such work, and then 'take bondes of them . . . in good somes of money, with condicion that they shall not buy or bargaine any manner of wools contrary to the tenour and forme of the said Statute'.⁶

¹ *D. S. P.*, *Eliz.*, cxvii. 38, October 1577.

² *Brit. Mus.*, *Add. MSS.* 34324, ff. 8-10 (May 23, 1585). Also f. 14.

³ *Kenvon MSS.*, *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, p. 595 (June 26, 1588).

⁴ *Acts of Privy Council*, August 9, 1590, vol. xix, pp. 370-1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, May 28, 1590 (vol. xix, p. 169).

⁶ *Add. MSS.* 34324, f. 14.

It seemed impossible either to end or mend the wool-chapman ; firstly, because he was an economic necessity ; secondly, because he was linked up in close alliance with the Merchants of the Staple, who still possessed some strength ; and thirdly, because the justices of the peace, in whose hands rested the administration of all these social and economic statutes, might enforce the Act or leave it a dead letter, according to their temper and the need of the locality for the wool-man. James I tried to solve the problem by making certain places staple towns, at which done wool could be exchanged. Kendal¹ and Leeds² were amongst the towns chosen, and all dealers were ordered to become members of the Company of Staplers. This attempt only helped to make still more difficult the work of exchange in wool, and before long the middleman was as powerful as ever. A general ordinance was made some time in the early seventeenth century, allowing the terms of the Halifax Act to be extended over the whole clothing area, and the wool-dealers were not slow to take an ell when allowed an inch. We may conclude this chapter with a recognition of their triumph by quoting a little more of the clothiers' petition of 1640. Here the petitioners, after pleading for a stoppage of the apprenticeship prosecutions, mentioned the extension of the Halifax Act alluded to above.

'But see it is . . . that under Colour and pretence of doeing good . . . to ye Clothier (by bringing wools for him from a distance), they, on the contrarie, if any Countryman or any wool-man that dwells farre remote, doe bring in his wolle to ye Townes of Leedes, Wakefield, Rippon, Doncaster and Pomfrett, which are Markett Townes within ye Compasse of 20 miles of ye clothing townes, and are such marketts where the Clothiers can and doe usualie frequent, even there the said woollmen doe come, purposelie to forstall ye wolle, soe that ye poore Clothiers cannot be served but at their handes againe, which is a very greate grievance to them.'

It was requested, therefore, that 'the woollmen may be restreyned from buying and ingrossing the wolle comeing to ye Markett townes of Leedes, Wakefield, Rippon, Doncaster, and Pomfret'. The dealer had seized upon every stronghold of wool-dealing, and secured his position as a permanent factor in the economy of the domestic system.

¹ *D. S. P., Jas. I, xcii. 28.*

² *D. S. P., Chas. I, cccclx. 64 (1640).*

CHAPTER IV

THE STATE REGULATION OF THE YORKSHIRE CLOTH INDUSTRY UP TO THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

'TRICKS of the trade' are not peculiar to the modern industrial world, and in view of the many popular attacks which are made to-day on the dishonesty of business it is refreshing to find that questionable practices in industry are as old as industry itself, and that 'business secrets' of fraud and deceit formed part and parcel of production long before the days of the power-loom, the big firm, and the world-market. The record of our own county is as disreputable as that of any other industrial area, and the perverted ingenuity of the Yorkshire clothier presented a constant puzzle to the forces of government, so long as the State attempted to maintain a code of industrial ethics.

The regulation of the cloth industry by the State was guided by two primary considerations. Firstly, there was a real and genuine desire to keep the English pieces at a high and uniform standard of quality, and to maintain the good name of English fabrics both at home and abroad. As the export trade in cloth grew, this motive became very important, and countless statutes were prompted thereby, all of which aimed at keeping up the reputation of our textile goods in the European markets. Secondly, there were financial considerations, which regarded the cloths from the point of view of revenue. As English wool began to be worked up more at home, the revenue which had formerly been drawn from the export of the raw material must now be obtained from levies imposed upon the manufactured article. Hence, just as the staple was intended to supervise the finances of the wool revenue, so some machinery must be devised for controlling the sale of cloths in the interests of the Exchequer.

These two motives, interwoven almost inextricably at times, but with the former eventually predominant, guided the State regulation of the industry almost from the beginnings of cloth-making down to the nineteenth century, when the State abandoned all attempts at controlling the quality of the goods, and

contented itself with supervising the conditions of labour. The attitude of the State was somewhat as follows : For the purposes of revenue, the same quantity of cloth of the same quality must always pay the same contribution to the national chest. Therefore the most simple method was to order uniformity of dimensions for all pieces of the same kind ; let the length, breadth, and weight of each variety of cloth be laid down by law, with severe penalties upon such as disregarded these specifications. Then, with all cloths reduced to standards, let subsidy be paid according to the nature and value of the piece. Again, in the interests of honest workmanship, it would be better to have uniformity of dimensions, for only by the rigid enforcement of actual standards of length and breadth did it seem possible to check the ' fraude and deceipt ' which for so long were the bane of legislators. Laws were therefore enacted which fixed standards of length, weight, and breadth, forbade the use of certain materials or processes, and laid down in a more or less comprehensive manner the conditions of manufacture.

To pass an elaborate measure is one thing ; to have its clauses enforced and obeyed is a very different matter. It is not necessary to enlarge on the incentives to law-breaking in such cases as this. The clothier made pieces with a view to selling them, rather than for the purpose of demonstrating his law-abidingness. The statutory specifications might not present any difficulty ; but often they did, for it was seldom possible to satisfy all the law's demands. Obedience sometimes meant all the difference between profit and loss, especially if the needs of the foreign markets and the regulations of the home government did not happen to coincide. Hence the decrees of the rulers ' up yonder ' in London were looked upon by many Yorkshiremen as orders made only to be disregarded whenever business enterprise and private gain disagreed with the laws made for the common weal. Those who framed the laws saw all this, and realized that industrial legislation would be nothing but a mass of empty phrases unless means were provided for the enforcement of such decrees. For this reason they made arrangements for the appointment of men whose business it was to see that the cloth laws were obeyed, men with power of search amongst the scattered clothiers of the rural areas, men

with authority to confiscate all products of illegal workmanship, and, at the same time, men in whose hands lay the task of collecting the subsidies on cloth for the replenishing of the Exchequer. Thus we have the ulnager, and later the searchers, appointed for the difficult work of collecting revenue and enforcing legal restrictions upon an industry which was becoming increasingly flexible in character and more scattered in the area of its activity.

These are the broad lines of the subject; we can now approach it in more detail. The Assize of Measures (1197) regulated measurements of almost every description.¹ Concerning cloth it was ordained that 'woollen cloths, wherever they are made, shall be made of the same width, to wit two ells within the lists, and of the same goodness in the middle and sides'. Here was regulation of width and also of quality. The 'width clause' was repeated in Magna Carta,² and further declarations of a similar character were issued during the reign of Henry III. English merchants, however, found these restrictions most inconvenient, and many obtained liberty to deal in cloth of any breadth, whilst foreign cloths imported into this country could not be expected to conform to the English official measurements.³

Edward I⁴ made a return to the Assize (1278), but admitted a certain variety of standards and qualities:

'Henceforth every cloth of England worth four shillings an ell and upwards shall be of the breadth of two ells within the lists, and other cloths of lower price shall be seven quarters (of an ell) . . . and that all foreign cloths shall be 26 ells and 6 quarters wide. And that all cloth which is not of assize, except the serges of the parts beyond the sea and of Scotland and Ireland, for which there is no certain measure in this realm, shall be confiscated.'

Here the length of a whole cloth was fixed for the first time; foreign cloth was ordered to conform to English standards for

¹ Roger de Hoveden, *Chronica*, iv. 33. The 'list' was, of course, the narrow strip of waste on both edges of the cloth, useful in tenting, &c.

² Magna Carta, c. 35 'Una latitudo pannorum tinctorum et russetorum et habergettorum, scilicet duae ulnae infra listas.'

³ e.g. Statutes 9 Hen. III and 56 Hen. III; see Close Rolls, 6 Ed. I, m. 7 d; Madox, *Exchequer*, chap. xii, p. 324.

⁴ Close Rolls, 6 Ed. I, m. 7 d (1278).

rather assessment of import dues, but the cheaper wares of the North and West were allowed to be of any dimensions.

In order to enforce this declaration two men were appointed to view all cloths exposed for sale, whether home-made or of foreign manufacture, and to confiscate all wares not in accordance with proper dimensions.¹ Shortly afterwards the work passed to the hands of one man, who was generally appointed for life to the office of ulnager of canvas, linen, kerseys, serges, and all kinds of cloth of London, York, Winchester, Bristol, Lincoln, Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk, Kent, Stamford, Beverley, St. Osyth, Devon and Cornwall.²

This man was the ulnager, a person destined to play an important part in the textile world for the next four centuries. His work was to enforce the assize of cloth as fixed by the government of the day, and to collect the subsidy levied on cloth manufactured for sale. His province was the whole of England and Wales, and consequently he was obliged to enlist the services of a large number of deputy-ulnagers. There was one for Yorkshire, Cumberland, Westmorland, and Northumberland, one for Lincolnshire, and one in each of the remaining cloth-making areas of the kingdom. The deputies lived in the locality to which they were appointed, and were responsible for the enforcement of the assize in their respective districts.³ They were to examine and seal all taxable cloths before the fabrics could be exposed for sale. Pieces which were not of assize, or were exposed for sale without having first received the ulnager's seal and sanction, were to be confiscated, and in some cases were conveyed to the Tower of London, there to be disposed of as the King should deem best.⁴ From this inspection the cheapest saleable cloths were exempt. 'Cogware' and Kendal cloths, made from 'the worst wool within the realm' and sold chiefly to 'poor and mean people', were of such small

¹ Patent Rolls, 7 Ed. I, m. 3 (1270).

² Patent Rolls, 9 Ed. II, pt. i, m. 25 (1315). See also Patent Rolls, 22 Ed. III, pt. i, m. 27.

³ Patent Rolls, 23 Ed. III, pt. i, m. 12, and 25 Ed. III, pt. i, m. 6. Also 26 Ed. III, pt. i, m. 27. E.g. John Pathorn of York, draper, and Wm. Bellepointed by Wm. Herry, ulnager of cloth for England, to be his deputies in the County of York (Patent Rolls, 3 Rich. II, pt. ii, m. 26 (1380)).

⁴ Order to bailiffs, sheriffs, mayors, &c., to provide carriage for John Marreys, King's Ulnager, for conveying to the Tower of London all cloths arrested as forfeit for not being of assize (Patent Rolls, 1350, m. 1).

value that the State did not think it worth while to enforce its decrees, or levy taxation, upon such cheap wares.¹

A fixed assize of length and breadth was apparently of doubtful value, and at times during the fourteenth century was abolished. For instance, an assize of cloth was issued in 1328,² fixing the dimensions of cloths in the raw state. In 1353 freedom was given to make cloths of any dimensions, provided, however, 'that the King's Ulnager shall measure the cloth and mark the same, by which mark a man may know how much the cloth containeth'.³ Thirty-six years later, in 1389, the assize was revived,⁴ except for the coarsest qualities of cloth.⁵ This remained in operation until 1393, when all persons were once more allowed to make and sell cloth of such lengths and breadths as they pleased, provided each piece was searched and sealed by the ulnager before being sold.⁶ This Act was important, in that it affected all kinds of cloth intended for sale, whatever the size or quality.

The examination of saleable cloths, whilst important in itself, was only the preliminary to the real work of the ulnager, i. e. the collection of the subsidy on cloth.⁷ The ulnager was primarily a financial agent of the Crown, and as such had to collect the sums levied on cloths made for sale. When the cloth had been sealed, the ulnager demanded an ulnage fee of one halfpenny, and a subsidy of fourpence for each whole cloth of assize, or sixpence in the case of scarlet cloths. The whole cloth of assize was 26-28 yards in length, and 6-6½ quarters in breadth.⁸ Half cloths paid twopence, but by the statute of 1353 no subsidy was to be paid for cloths containing less than half a cloth of assize. The kerseys and many other cloths made in the West Riding were less than half a cloth: hence they escaped not merely the payment of subsidy but also the preliminary inspection.

¹ Statute, 13 Rich. II, c. 10.

² Statute, 2 Ed. III, c. 14.

³ *Statutes of the Realm*, i. 330.

⁴ Statute, 13 Rich. II, c. 10.

⁵ The Act of 13 Rich. II, i. c. 10, has an interesting paragraph on cheap cloth: 'Forasmuch as it hath been a common custom to make certain cloths in divers counties called Cogware and Kendal cloth . . . sold to cogmen out of the realm, and also to poor and mean people within the realm, of the which cloths a great part is made of the worst wool within this realm, that cannot well serve for any other cloths'; these cloths were therefore allowed to remain free of any regulation or taxation.

⁶ Statute, 17 Rich. II, c. 2 (1393).

⁷ Patent Rolls, 27 Ed. III, pt. iii, m. 5 (1354).

⁸ Statute, 27 Ed. III, stat. i, c. 4. 'Quarter' here means a quarter of a yard.

by the ulnager. This was all altered by the Act of 1393, which imposed the payment of revenue on all cloths 'as well as others'.¹ From that time onward, the kersey makers of the West Riding had to place their wares under the ulnager's hand and pay their tribute. Since the average kersey made in Yorkshire was equal to about a quarter of a whole cloth of wool, it contributed one penny as subsidy. In practice, the 'laid cloths', 'cottons', and 'Cogware' of the far northern counties remained exempt from control all through the fifteenth century, and no ulnager's documents exist for the area east of the Pennine Chain.

With the expansion of the woollen industry during the fifteenth century the yield from the subsidy and ulnage became an important part of the royal revenue. Monarchs regarded it as a constant and regular stream of income, which could be utilized in paying off debts or in providing annuities for old and faithful servants. For instance, in 1410 Henry IV granted one of his serjeants-at-arms 'twelve pence daily for life for the issues of the ulnage and subsidy of cloths in the County of York',² and three years later he made a similar grant to another serjeant 'of £34 11s. 3d. yearly from the subsidy and ulnage of cloths in the City and County of York'.³ When Henry died, his widow received a large annuity, including £168 from the revenue on Yorkshire cloths, £100 from that of Somersetshire, and other sums from the money paid by the merchants of Dorset, Southampton, Surrey, Sussex, and East Anglia.⁴ To give a last instance, Edward IV, immediately on his accession to the throne, sought to reward the Nevilles, and also to bind them more closely to his side, by handing over to John Nevill, Lord Montagu, the whole of the ulnage of Yorkshire, with all its revenues from subsidy, ulnage, and the sale of forfeited cloths.⁵

¹ Statute 17 Rich. II, c. 2.

² Patent Rolls, 11 Hen. IV, pt. i, m. 1.

³ Patent Rolls, 14 Hen. IV, m. 18.

⁴ Patent Rolls, 1 Hen. V, pt. v, mm. 10 and 11 (1414). More ambitious was the grant in 1442, to Leo, Lord of Welles, and late Lieutenant of Ireland, 'of the sum of 113 marks yearly . . . out of subsidy and ulnage of cloths for sale in the County and City of York . . . and in Kyngeston-upon-Hull . . . until he be satisfied of the sum of £2,000 and more, due to him by the King' (Patent Rolls, 20 Hen. VI, pt. iii, m. 15 (1442)).

⁵ Patent Rolls, 1 Ed. IV, pt. iv, m. 2.

The work of the ulnager was supplemented by the activities of the searchers appointed by the crafts, who strove to enforce the legal assize, and at the same time attempted to maintain the quality of the fabrics made in the towns. That this dual system of inspection fully achieved its aim is very improbable. The frequent revisions of the law and the declarations of municipal authorities and gilds seem to indicate that the mediaeval cloth-maker was not invariably law-abiding. Numerous instances of fraud and deceit are recorded, and commissions were occasionally sent out to study the working of the Cloth Acts and to suggest improvements in legislation and administration.¹ In short, it seems to have been impossible effectively to regulate the industry even when it was largely confined to the towns. Hence when the expansion of the following centuries began to make itself felt, when the drift from the towns weakened the control of the craft searchers and the rural areas became the strongholds of the industry, it was even less possible for the old local and national machinery to be effective. The industry was becoming much more important as a source of national wealth, but its development was on such lines that the old police systems were more and more inadequate for keeping it under supervision. One arm of control, that of the gilds, was losing its strength, and it was therefore necessary that the State should provide stronger regulations to uphold a fair standard of quality in the English pieces. So we enter a bewildering maze of legislation throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, regulating every detail of dimension for every variety of cloth, forbidding certain processes, and prescribing the general and detailed character of the manufacture. One Act succeeded another with great rapidity, and the Yorkist and Tudor Parliaments evolved some measures which in complexity and intricacy rivalled a modern Insurance Act.

What were the tricks of trade against which these statutes were directed? Particular complaints occur from time to time,

¹ There were constant attempts to evade the ulnage, and nearly every ulnage account contained records of forfeiture made by some one who had attempted to sell cloth unsealed. In 1358 there was a Commission for the whole kingdom, with seven commissioners for Yorkshire, because the 'King learned he is greatly defrauded by the subtle machinations of merchants and others, who are selling cloths before they are sealed' (Patent Rolls, 32 Ed. III, pt. ii, m. 6 d).

but the general faults which run throughout the whole story, and which were concerned with all the processes, from weaving onwards, can be briefly summed up as follows :

(1) The use of flocks, thrums (i.e. waste ends of wool and yarn), and other inferior materials and rubbish in the weaving of the cloth. This working of waste odds and ends into the body of the cloth when weaving seems to have been a common practice, which called forth general condemnation from pamphleteers and legislators.

(2) The mixing of wool of various kinds and standards of pining in the same piece, and also the use of better qualities of yarn at the ends of the piece than in the middle. These practices caused the fabric to be composed of material of very uneven quality and standard. The inequalities were accentuated after the fulling, when certain parts had shrunk more than others, and thus the piece would be uneven, of varying width, thickness, and quality, exhibiting that strange effect known to contemporaries as 'cockling' or 'banding'.

These practices, however, were mere trifles compared with the frauds practised in tentering the cloth. The piece had shrunk considerably during the washing and fulling; the extent of the shrinkage varied according to the fineness of the yarn which had been used in making the cloth, and other considerations, so that the size of the piece after fulling might be doubtful. In the tentering process, the cloth was stretched upon a long wooden frame, and was then pulled out to its final dimensions. These measurements were those fixed by the particular statute which was at that time in operation, and so the cloth, no matter what its length after fulling, must be stretched to the stipulated legal length and breadth. This often meant that the piece was excessively stretched, and the cloth which could have undergone a little tentering without any harm was, by this over-tentering, rendered thin and threadbare in places. In such circumstances 'medicine' was applied to restore the cloth to its pristine thickness and firmness. This was done by covering the cloth with a coating or pigment of some concoction, in which flocks, waste wool, thrums, chalk, oatmeal, and similar substances were to be found. Thanks to this reinforcement, the cloth now appeared firm to the touch

and pleasing to the eye; it was not until the fabric was worn and the rain came down that the deception became apparent, as the 'medicine' was washed out and the cloth shrank towards its minimum dimensions.¹

It was against such practices as these that legislation hurled its prohibitions. The frauds debased the name of English cloths in the foreign market, and would lose for this country the foreign cloth trade unless they were speedily checked. The Government therefore did its utmost to stamp out all such nefarious practices. It did not attempt at first to meddle with the coarser wares, and Kendal cloths, 'frizes', 'cottons', and similar qualities of North-Country textiles were generally exempted from the force of these reformatory statutes. The better class of goods, the kerseys and broad cloths, were not excused, and many of the cloths on which the West Riding was building up a thriving industry would therefore come within the scope of these enactments. Certainly, as the sixteenth-century Statute Book shows, Yorkshire needed to be watched, for its reputation was in many respects very bad.

From the accession of Edward IV to the reign of James I there is an almost unbroken succession of enactments, all of which attempted to encourage the cloth industry by making orders for its moral welfare, and by forbidding dishonest practices in the manufacture of textile fabrics. It would be unprofitable to enter into the details of those statutes, but it is possible to study their general character, and to note how the framers of such legislation learned wisdom and gained experience in the course of time. The Act of 1464 gives an excellent illustration of the nature of these enactments.² Its preamble is typical:

'Whereas for many years past and now at this day the workmanship of cloths and things requisite to the same is and hath been of such fraud, deceit, and falsity that the said cloths in other lands and countries be had in small reputation, to the great shame of this land.'

¹ These details of the nature of the frauds are drawn from pamphlets, complaints such as Leake's *Discourse* (see below), and other State papers, in addition to the statutes themselves.

² Statute 4 Ed. IV, c. 1. These Acts were generally worked out with minuteness of detail, and attempted to provide as adequately as possible for the control of the industry.

Therefore, for the reformation of the industry, it was ordered that various kinds of cloth, 'after the full watering, racking, straining and tentering of the same, ready for sale' should conform to certain stipulated lengths and breadths. Clothiers were forbidden to work lamb's wool, thrums, or chalk into the pieces, and officers were appointed to see that the Act was obeyed in all its details.

This Act of 1464 failed to bring about the reformation expected from it, and the statute of 1483 was intended as a supplement and extension.¹ The note of the new Act was its attack on excessive tentering; some cloths had been stretched to far more than the legal limits, and pieces which should have been only 24 yards in length had been 'drawn out to xxx yerdys, and in brede from seven quarters unto ye brede of ij yerdys'. The root of the evil seemed to lie in the fact that tentering was done privately, within doors, out of the public gaze. The Act therefore forbade the use of any cloth-stretching devices within houses or workrooms. Tenters were to be set up in open places only, and the mayors, bailiffs, and governors of boroughs, towns, and villages were to survey these open places diligently, in order to prevent excessive tentering. The assistance of the local authorities was thus enlisted, a policy which was materially developed during the next century. From the force of this Act there were numerous exceptions, especially of the cheaper northern cloths.²

Henry VIII, in the midst of his manifold activities, found time to attend to economic legislation, and the cloth laws of his reign were numerous; but they always exempted Kendals, Northern whites, 'fries', and Devon cloths, the cheap wares of the period.³ Yorkshire, however, was not to escape, for in 1533 a commission was appointed to inquire into some aspects of the West Riding industry. The details of the story are scanty, but it is clear that the Yorkshiresmen had been using blocks in the manufacture of their cloths, in a manner contrary to law. The commissioners had great difficulty in obtaining

¹ Statute 1 Rich. III, c. 8.

Kendals, 'frize ware', &c., were exempted.

² e.g. 14-15 Hen. VIII, c. 1 and c. 11. Also Statute 6 Hen. VIII, c. 9, for punishing deceits in making woollen cloths, excluding Cornwall, and friezies made in Wales, Lancashire, and Cheshire.

any information; witness the following letter, sent by Sir Marmaduke Constable to Thomas Cromwell, and dated October 3, 1533:

'Please it you bee aduised that accordyng to the Kyng's comysion to me and others directed for reformacon of fflokkyng of clothes in the West Parties of the Shyre of Yorke, by force whereof Sir John Nevyll, John Pullayn, and myselff have setten at Leydes, emong diuers of the clothmakers, wherby all the polycye we could devyse came not any to the knowlege of prove to be made agaynst the grett nombre of the offenders. Whereupon we appoynted another settinge att Pountfrett . . . trustyng by the same that the offenders shalbe brought to better knowlege, and the Kynges grace to profyt.'¹

After considerable trouble, the commissioners succeeded in drawing up a list of such as were weaving cloth with weft made of flocks.² This catalogue of offenders includes names from all the cloth-making centres of the West Riding, and mentions no less than 542 clothiers. Alongside each name stands the number of illegal cloths which were found in the possession of the offender. The general entry is one half-cloth, and the largest culprit is entered for three cloths only. Evidently this manufacture of cloths by using flocks as weft was a very small and insignificant matter. The explanation seems to be that the clothiers, in the course of their occupation, gradually accumulated a stock of flocks, thrums, waste yarn, &c. These scraps they kept on one side until they had a considerable pile at their disposal, when they worked up the whole into yarn of an inferior quality, and wove it into a cheap cloth. This was scarcely

¹ *State Papers, Henry VIII.*, § 79, p. 139.

² Exch. Accounts, bundle 345, no. 25: 'Nomina eorum qui operaverunt pannos licia vocat. fflocke.' This list contains 542 names, distributed as follows.

Hahfax	182 names	Heaton	18 names
Heptonstall	60 ..	Birstall	18 ..
Almondbury	55 ..	Wakefield	13 ..
Leeds	49 ..	Dewsbury	13 ..
Elland	49 ..	Batley	13 ..
Huddersfield	40 ..	Mirfield	8 ..
Bradford	24 ..		
		Total	542 ..

The names cover the whole of the cloth area, and a good percentage come from what is now the heavy woollen and shoddy district. Amongst the culprits appear most of the well-known industrial families of Yorkshire: Baynes, Walker, Musgrave, Kitson, Harrison, and Wilson, in Leeds; Crowther, Hirst, Wormald, Lee, Walker, Holdsworth, &c., in other parts.

a forerunner of the modern shoddy industry, for shoddy is made out of wool which has already been woven or knitted, and worn, whereas these sixteenth-century clothiers were utilizing the waste material which they accumulated in weaving kerseys, Northern Dozens, &c. To the clothier this practice was obviously a splendid piece of economy, and a utilization of waste products. In the eyes of the law it was a deceitful and lawless device which must be stopped. The commission reported to Thomas Cromwell, who entered in his 'Remembrancer', at least three times, 'To remember such as have caused cloths to be flocked in the North, and to know the Kynges pleasure'.¹ Little was done, for in 1534 a writer declared to Cromwell that in spite of the commission 'they doe nowe the same (flokkyng and false cloth making) moche more and worse than ever they dyd'.²

Commissions and legislation appear to have produced little effect upon the morality of the industry, and complaints began to come from the foreign countries which purchased English cloths.³ During the sixteenth century the number of varieties of native fabrics increased rapidly, and it was therefore possible for new types of cloth to escape the letter of the law, since they belonged to a class not mentioned in the statutes then in operation. In 1552 a great and comprehensive attempt was made to bring all existing varieties of cloth under the power of the law, and to establish a thorough scheme of regulation. A commission of 'certain wise discreet and sage knights and burgesses of Parliament' was given the task of inquiring amongst 'honest clothiers . . . drapers, merchant taylors, cloth-workers, shear-men and other artificers, . . . of such matters as touch as well the false as the true making of clothes, by whose declaration, consent and advice, after divers and sundry meetings' the new Act was to be framed.

The first point of importance about this statute⁴ was the variety of cloths for which regulation was ordered. No less than

Calendar of State Papers, Henry VIII, vol. vi, nos. 1370, 1371, and 1382, October 1533.

State Papers, Henry VIII, § 88, pp. 119-20.

Prohibition by Spain on foreign cloths. English cloths were admitted for a time, but the writer said that this favour would be quickly removed unless the English cloth-makers amended the faults in their cloth. Written at Valladolid, September 18, 1538 (*Calendar of State Papers*, vol. xiii, pt. ii, no. 383).

⁴ Statute 5-6 Ed. VI, c. 6.

22 different types of woollen cloth were catered for, and in each case full specifications were laid down. There were ordinary kerseys, sorting kerseys, Northern cloths, Northern dozens, Pennistones, Manchester, Lancashire and Cheshire 'cottons', Manchester rugs and 'fries', &c.¹ The Act really did attempt to embrace every variety of English woollen cloth which came into the market, and in order to do so it had to make provision for this great number of different fabrics.

The second feature of importance in the statute was the stress laid on the weight of cloths. It had become obvious at last that the provision of legal dimensions alone was insufficient, and was even provocative of fraud, since it tempted the clothier to stretch his pieces abnormally in order to bring them up to the legal length and breadth. In order to remedy this defect the new Act declared the weight of wool which must be put into each piece, or rather the weight of the piece when washed and dried, as well as the length and breadth of the fabric.

The dimensions stated in the Act were those of the cloth when fully wetted and shrunk, and the weight was to be that of the piece when thoroughly cleaned and dry. It was hoped now that by measuring the piece before tentering its real size could be ascertained. Makers of short-weight pieces were to be fined, and really faulty cloths confiscated. No cloth was to be stretched in tentering more than one yard in length or a quarter of a yard in breadth.

For the administration of this Act searchers were to be appointed. The mayors, bailiffs, and other chief officers of cities, boroughs, and corporate towns were given authority to appoint two or more 'discreet, honest and expert persons', who were endowed with full power of searching, measuring, and sealing, and with the right to confiscate cloths which infringed

¹ 'Pennistones' or 'forest whites' were cloths which seem to have been made especially at Penistone, near Barnsley. Or they may have taken their name from a coarse type of Yorkshire wool, known as Pennistone. For instance, the Northern wares were ordered to be as follows:

Ordinary kerseys . . .	Length, 17-19 yds.	Weight, 20 lb.
Sorting kerseys . . .	" 17-18 "	" 23 "

Northern whole broad cloths, of the kind made around Leeds, were to contain 23-25 yds. by 1½ yds., 'and being well scowered, thicked, milled, and fully dried, shall weigh lxxvj lb. (66 lb.) at the least'. Northern dozens: Length, 12-13 yds.; breadth, 1½ yds.; weight, 33 lb. Pennistones: length, 12-13 yds.; breadth, 6½ qrs.; weight, 28 lb.

the clauses of the statute. But all these provisions applied only to towns, and to cloths which were finished or made within the towns. There was no provision of machinery for the regulation of the rural industry, and so, apart from the ulnager, whose work was now little more than financial, the country cloths might pass uninspected, provided they did not come into the towns to receive their finishing touches. Hence the Act, full of good intentions, achieved very little. It was amended and strengthened in 1557,¹ when attention was given to the broad cloths of the West Riding, and, in a small degree, to rural cloths generally. But still no reformation was effected, and the famous complaint of Leake, written twenty years afterwards, revealed a lamentable lack of orthodox industrial morality amongst the clothiers of the North Country.² Leake's chief accusations against the Yorkshircmen and their neighbours were :

1) 'flockes, chalke, and other false oyntementes cast uppon clothe is specially used in the Northe partes, *wher no true clothes are made*, and this is the pryncipall poynte in the which the clothyer doth offend' :

2) For faulty dyeing, 'all the coulored clothes made in ye Northe is worst of all' :

(3) 'And especially for streatchinge and strayninge, Suffolke, Redding, and ye Northe partes . . . are greatly abused, . . . and generally where the clothyer doth dresse clothe at home before he sell itt, ther doe they moste stretche and strayne abomnably, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 yardes.'

(4) 'All other sortes of lowe prised clothes, and Northern clothes of all sortes and Kerseys, and cottons, freyse, etc., will not hold their contentes, beinge wette.'

And so Leake's indictment continues, against every fraud, conceivable or otherwise. He condemns all manner of deceits as practices which 'can nayther bee answered before God nor the World'. As to the cloth laws, 'better laws cannot bee made, onely there wants execuc'on, for wante therof bothe clothyer, alnager, searchers, merchantes and retaylers of clothe be growen into suche securitye yt ye lawe is forgotten, and they do what they liste'. The magistrates, noting the prevalence of such evil-doing, have let the laws fall into abeyance, 'and

¹ Statute 4-5 Philip and Mary, c. 5.

² *D. S. P., Eliz.*, cxi. 38. Also a copy in cclxxxvii. 96.

therbye all the falsehood hitherto hath bene couered, as it were under a bushell'. 'I am fullie of opinion', concludes Leake, 'that . . . generallie for all clothes the lawes were never yett observed in any place within the realme.'

These processes, so obnoxious to the legislator, were practised as commonly in the West Riding as elsewhere, especially that of stretching the piece to an excessive length, and then thickening it with a pigment of flocks. In 1590¹ complaint was made to the Privy Council of the 'great deceptes used and permitted in the chopping of flockes and rubbing the same into cloth by the greatest parte of clothiers in the County of Yorke'. The Council took the matter into consideration, and eventually appointed Randall Tenche to 'deface and cutt in peeces or burne all such blockes or bordes as have been or are now used for the chopping of flockes'.

Whilst complaints were coming from within the country, the murmur of discontent from abroad grew louder concerning the inferior quality of some of the cloths which were bought from England. In 1589² the Estates of Holland dispatched to Elizabeth a complaint 'of the great defectes and fraudes in the Englische clothes brought thether', and in 1592 Monsieur Carron, the agent of the Low Countries, resident in England, presented a long list of grievances against English wares. He declared that the fabries imported into the Low Countries by the Merchant Adventurers were 'not only full of holes and in certen faults muche worse than can bee seen outwards, but also [were] narrower and shorter than they ought to bee, wherby the merchants which cometh to buy them without openinge or measuring of them, . . . when they sell them by the ell or measure they find themselves shortened and deceaved of that which they thought to have; which is the cause that manie merchant clothbuyers of the United Provinces can not of late profite anie waye by the said clothes, but become poore'. Carron asserted that the faults mentioned were especially prevalent amongst the kerseys and 'Dozens', which were often two yards below

¹ Acts of Privy Council, December 24, 1590.

² *Ibid.*, December 28, 1589. In 1593 the soldiers then in the Low Countries were complaining that 'the apparel is not equal to the patterns, and is of bad stuff which soon wears, the cloth shrinks, the stockings are short, and the shoes bad'. This was due partly to Elizabeth's economy, and partly to the antics of the English clothiers (*D. S. P., Eliz.*, ccxliv. 821).

the proper length; all of which, he declared, 'is wholie against the goodwill of her Ma^{ty} and contrarie to your good and laudable Statutes of Parliament therupon made, which ought to be observed as well for the Lowe Countries as for Englande'.¹

These protests at last bore fruit in a renewal of industrial legislation, and it is significant that the first sweeping enactment concerned itself solely with cloth made north of the Trent.² This Act of 1597³ was surprisingly harsh in tone, and aimed with deadly intent at 'checking the deceitfull stretching and tainting of Northerne Cloths'. The preamble was as illuminating as it was prolix; it spoke of the 'many goode and wholesome lawes heretofore made for the true makying of good and true clothes and karseis, which lawes, either by some wants in the statutes already made, or for lacke of the due execucon of the saide lawes have not only not restrayned the great abuse in makying of clothes and karseis, but rather have increased the same, insomuch that the Northerne clothes and karseis doe yerely and dayly grow worse and worse, and are made more light and moche more stretched and strayned than heretofore they have bene, to the greate deceit of all nations . . . and to the shame and slaunder of the countrie where the same is made, and in short tyme like utterlie to overthrowe the trade of clothynge'. This great depravity the legislators imputed chiefly to the 'greate number of tentors and other engines daylie used and practised . . . for the stretchynge and strayingne of the . . . clothes and Karseis'. Therefore the Act, with righteous indignation and firm determination to destroy the evil, root and branch, declared that 'no person or persons within any of the counties on the Northside of the Ryver of Trent shall stretche or strayne . . . any clothes, dozens, kersies, pennistones, rugs, frizes, Kighley whites, . . . or any other clothes made within the counties aforesaid, upon pain to forfeit £5 for every default. And further that no person . . . shall use or occupie any tenter or any manner of wrinche rope or engines to stretche or strayne

¹ *Salisbury MSS., Hist. MSS. Comm.*, pt. iv, p. 216, July 1592. Also *D. S. P., Eliz.*, cexlii. 75, July 1592: 'The Copie of the first five Articles exhibited by M. Carron in the names of the State Generall of the United Provinces of the Low Countries.'

² As early as 1580 a Bill for the search of cloths made in the County of York had been before the House of Commons, but had been abandoned (*House of Commons Journals*, i. 124).

³ Statute 39 Eliz., c. 20.

any clothes ' under a penalty of £20 fine. In other words, the use of tenters was entirely forbidden.

Secondly, all cloths were to be made of the weight and dimensions stated in previous Acts, and the manufacturer was to place on the end of each piece, before selling it, a seal, on which was his own name, as well as the specifications of the cloth.

It was not intended that this statute should fail in its objects through faulty administration; further, it was not intended that the rural industry should escape any longer from thorough supervision. The Act therefore gave detailed and elaborate orders for the provision of administrative machinery, both for town and country alike. The Justices of the Peace were to appoint searchers for the rural areas, whilst the municipal authorities chose similar officers for the towns. The searchers were elected for one year,¹ during which time they had full power to go, once a month at least, into the houses or work-rooms of all workers in wool, to search for faulty workmanship, and to measure and seal all cloths when ready for the market. At the same time they were to hunt for tenters, and when they found any they were to deface the frames so that they could not be used henceforth.

The main provision of the Act² was 'Death to the tenter'. This would be a staggering blow to every cloth-maker in the county. There was scarcely a clothier of any standing but had his tenter frame, on which he stretched the shrunk fabric, after its visit to the fulling mill, into uniformity and legality of length and breadth. Without tentering, the piece would be contracted to small and uneven proportions, it would present a dishevelled and unkempt appearance, and would not sell at any profitable price. Industry without the tenter was impossible. And yet the 'big folk' up in London, ignorant of the needs and the means of the clothiers, had ordered that all stretch-

¹ The searchers on election were to take oath, and be bound with a guarantee of £40, to do their duty faithfully and thoroughly. The exhortation administered them by the J.P. read as follows: 'You shall swear that you shall use your best endeavours by all lawfull means dureing your continuance in the office of searchers, . . . to see all lawes and statutes concerninge clothinge bee well and truly observed and kept, and that you shall make a true presentment with accompte in wrytinge at every generall sessions for your division within the said Rydinge of all your whole proceedings in your office, soe helpe you God.'

² The Act was extended to the whole country four years later; 43 Eliz., c. 10.

ing of cloth should cease, and threatened a St. Bartholomew's Day on all tenters.

The Act was received with very mixed feelings by the various parties concerned. The French Ambassador in London caused it,¹ along with other cloth laws, to be translated into French, and disseminated in his own country, and the French Government began to confiscate any English pieces which went into that country bearing signs of stretching. In England the Privy Council, which was chiefly responsible for supervising the administration of such Acts by local authorities, dispatched frequent letters to the justices of the Northern counties, exhorting them to enforce the Act of 1597, and destroy the accursed tenters. But the justices, who had fought so strenuously in the battle over the Ship-money levies, did not intend to surrender without a hard struggle on a matter which was much more important in its permanent effects. They, who lived in the very heart of the clothing area, knew that the tenter was a necessary piece of apparatus to the clothier's art, and that the industry could not be carried on without using the tenter frames. They were also fully aware that any attempt to demolish these tenters would mean an attack on the property of nearly every clothier, and would bring about their own ears such a storm of protest and opposition that their lives would be unbearable. Hence, little wonder if they allowed their loyalty to their county to outweigh considerations of obedience to Her Majesty's Government. They ranged themselves on the side of the clothiers, and refused to put the Act into operation. The Privy Council sent long letters to the West Riding magistrates, informing them of the confiscations which were taking place in France, bewailing the fact that cloth came to the markets as bad as ever it had been,² and finally urging the need for a rigorous administration of the Act. To those letters the justices presented a front of masterly indifference and inactivity, which irritated the Privy Council in no small measure. At last the Council threw persuasion to the winds, and spoke in terms of anger to the disobedient Yorkshiremen. This was in 1600, after two years had been wasted in peaceful persuasion; and the

¹ *D. S. P., Eliz.*, cclxix. 45.

² *D. S. P., Eliz.*, cclxix. 45, declared that 'cloth cometh to the market worse than better'.

wrath of the Privy Council was now turned against the justices for Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Westmorland jointly.

'It ys not, or ought not to be unknowne unto you that there ys a statute made in the xxxixth yere of her Majesty's raigne, against the deceyptfull makinge . . . of certayne clothes. . . . Nevertheless, notwithstandinge the Statute so latelie made with soche care and provicion to redresse and remedie thes sclanderous abuses, by which the credit and estymacion of our cloths ys so moche demynished and sclandered as of late there ys an edict sett forth by the French Kinge by which all Englishe clothes which shalbe brought into that realme are declared confiscable that have bene tentered or stretched, or made of two wolles, rowed, cockled, and stuffed with flockes.'

Still, in spite of the good intentions of the legislators, the laws are left inoperative by those who should enforce them, and cloth is as bad as ever it was. Concerning this 'contempt of the lawe and prejudice of the Common Wealth', the Council continues, 'wee have cause to note a greate wante of care in you (i. e. the Northern magistrates) in that you neglect the due execucion of that lawe, and therefore wee doe will and commaunde you in Her Majesty's name that you will have due regard hereafter to see the said statute observed and put in execucion accordinge to the tenor, purport and true meanyng of the same in all places within the countie'. The justices are to enforce the Act at once, and order that all tenters shall be completely defaced. The letter concludes with a stern note of warning: 'Otherwyse . . . you will be called to a strict accompt for the neglect of your duties, . . . and further notice maie be taken of soch of you as shalbe fownde negligent and remisse herein, as other more carefull persons maie supplie their places.'¹ Even such a minatory epistle failed to make the justices stir in the matter, and six months later, in 1601, the Council declared in most injured tones, 'nothings hathe bene as yet don for redres of the said deceypt, . . . and wee cannott but fynde it strange that you should use such slackness in a reformation . . . of so greate waight and ymportance'.²

Hard words indeed, but not sufficiently strong to move the justices to attempt the impossible. What matter if the French monarch had ordered all English cloths taken into France to be

¹ *Acts of the Privy Council*, August 24, 1600, vol. xxx, pp. 602-3.

² *Ibid.*, January 22, 1601, vol. xxxi, p. 111.

aked in water, and was confiscating those which shrank under that test? The tenter was a necessity for trimming up the piece, and one might almost say that no tentering meant no profit. Hence protests were sent to the central authorities from the justices of the peace, clothiers, and merchants.¹ The traders who were engaged in selling the English wares declared that the practice was carried on by their foreign competitors, and that it would be impossible for English cloth to gain a market abroad unless tentering was allowed. They stated, with how much truth one cannot say, that Muscovites, Russians, and 'they of Barbarie' desired cloth which would shrink, and did not in the least object to stretched cloth. Finally, they urged that unless the cloth could be stretched it would be too costly for the inhabitants of those regions to which it was formerly exported.² The result of these agitations was to obtain a number of exemptions from the full force of the Act, and these privileges were eventually crystallized in a statute in 1623.³ In this new Act, tenter-frames were permitted to exist and to be used, but they were to be so constructed that no more than a certain specified amount of straining could be effected by them. The distance which the bottom beam of the framework might be lowered was not to exceed a certain amount, and all tenters which violated these conditions by allowing more than the legal 'chase' were to be defaced instantly, and their owners fined 40s. for the benefit of the poor.

This was a great triumph for the clothiers, for the permissive Act amounted in practice to an admission of the injustice of the anti-tenter laws, and a surrender to the clothiers. Probably the passing of the new statute made no actual difference in the procedure of the industry, and certainly it failed just as much as its predecessors to achieve anything substantial. True, the various enactments were not quite dead letters.⁴ Searchers

The J.P.'s of Lancashire gained the concession in 1600 that tenters should be permitted to remain in existence, but were to be so made as not to allow excessive tentering (*Acts of Privy Council*, January 4, 1600-1, vol. xxxi, 7-8).

² Cotton MSS. (Brit. Mus.), Galba E, vol. i, 320-2, April 1605.

Statute 21 Jas. I, c. 18.

⁴ In West Riding Quarter Sessions Indictment Books one occasionally encounters cases of excessive tentering being punished, but such cases are comparatively rare. One man in 1648 was fined £20 for the offence (Indictment Book B, Wakefield Quarter Sessions, January 1649). In the Sowerby Constable's Accounts, mention is made of warrants for bringing such as had

were appointed, and clothiers were hauled before the magistrates for deceitful making of cloth and for excessive tentering. But in spite of the activity, more or less spasmodic, of these local inspectors, there was little improvement in the 'tone' of the industry, and the cries of fraud and deceit continued almost without abatement during the seventeenth century. New types of cunning workmanship came into prominence, new complaints were voiced, and new attempts made to check these practices, either by reinforcing existing laws and reviving old forms of regulation, or by inventing new methods of control. These attempts will form the subject of a subsequent chapter, but we can conclude this section by quoting the lamentation of May in 1613, to show how completely the Tudor legislation had failed to fulfil its purpose. May cites a long list of nefarious practices, and piles a terrible indictment upon the heads of the clothiers. He then concludes as follows:

'Whiles the true making of cloth endured in reasonable manner, it was most vendible in all parts. But what maketh those now to refuse it, being brought to their owne doors, which before time earnestly sought it at ours? Falsehood! . . . What maketh the gentleman complain of the wool that lyeth on his hands? The clothier complain of his dead sales? The merchant complain of his losse? All but falsehood! How thick are certificates of falsehood returned upon our merchants from beyond the seas! In provinces beyonde the boundes of Christendome, when a Turk or Infidel brusheth his garment bare that he may number the threads, and findeth here and there holes and faults, then our Christian profession is called into question by these prophane people. In Kingdoms nere us, these abuses have bene founde so odious, and their people so much wronged, that they have made laws and edicts to banish our cloth out of their countries, rather desiring our wool wherewith to make true commodities. In our own countrie, where mucche of our wool may be vented, the falsehood of clothing is so common that every one striveth to wear anything rather than cloth. If a gentleman make a liverie for his man, in the first showre of raine it may fit his Page for Bignesse!'¹

made deceitful cloth, there is a warrant for one man who had flocked some cloth, and another for refusing to take up the office of searcher (Halifax Antiq. Soc., 1902). In 1648 it was stated at the Leeds Quarter Sessions that there was great complaint of the abuse of clothiers in making tenters of greater chase than was allowed by the statute, and searchers were consequently ordered to give careful attention to the matter, and deface all offending frames (Quarter Sessions Ord.: Book C, 101 a and 148 a).

¹ *The True Estate of Clothing in the Realm*, by J. May (1613).

CHAPTER V

MARKETS AND MERCHANTS: THE ORGANIZATION OF HOME AND FOREIGN TRADE IN YORKSHIRE CLOTH, UP TO THE RESTORATION

Long before 1600, Yorkshire pieces had become a commodity of commercial importance. As we have seen already, the wares of York and Beverley had been noted in their day, and during the sixteenth century the produce of the Northern counties generally was meeting a certain kind of demand, both at home and abroad. The broad Northern Dozen and the narrow kersey, which were the best of the Yorkshire fabrics, commanded only low prices when compared with the high-class fabrics of the West of England. Pennistones, 'Keighley whites', and other varieties made in Yorkshire and the North belonged to even lower grades of quality. The merchants of the Northern ports were partly within the bounds of truth when they declared in 1591 that 'the clothes shipped in those cuntryes (counties) bee course clothes, and most of them made of course wooll of the growthe of those cuntryes and flaxe and thrummes'.¹

Such fabrics met the needs of the poorer classes in Yorkshire and elsewhere. Many of the pieces were therefore sold in the local cloth fairs and markets, where, as in the eighteenth century, clothier and merchant met on certain fixed days. Scarcely anything is known of these markets until the days of Defoe, beyond the fact that they existed.² The merchants or factors who purchased the pieces then sold some of them locally, but the great bulk of the cloth either passed to London, and thence

D. S. P., Eliz., ccxxxix. 54 (1591). The broad cloth, either in its full length of 24 yds., or as a 'Dozen' of 12-13 yds., represented the highest grade of Northern fabrics. It was made of the best wool, chiefly drawn from Lincolnshire or other southern counties. Next in order of merit came the kersey, which was very little inferior in quality to the broad, but longer and not so wide. It was made of the same brands of wool as the Dozen, and sold at 6d. to 2s. 6d. per yard in the early seventeenth century when broads sold at 4s. to 5s. These two cloths were the staples of the Yorkshire industry and export trade. See next chapter for details as to further varieties and standards of manufacture.

¹ For account of Yorkshire cloth fairs see Chapter XI. Also Chapter VI for position of merchants.

to other parts of England, or went, via London, York, Hull, Newcastle, or Chester, to serve the poor of Europe.

At the same time many of the wealthy clothiers took or sent their own cloths to London, instead of relying on the Yorkshire markets for sale. This trade between Yorkshire and London was of great importance, and thousands of pieces travelled south each year, to be sold at the annual fair of St. Bartholomew or in the more frequent sales at Blackwell Hall. The yearly fair in London was opened on the day before the Feast of St. Bartholomew,¹ and continued over the two subsequent days. The venue was the churchyard of the Priory Church in West Smithfield, and the fair had become famous as a cloth exchange.² Here the booths of the clothiers were erected and the pieces exposed for sale; at night the gates were locked to prevent the theft of the goods. The cloth booths seem to have been the freehold property of the clothiers, who used them annually for the display of their wares and at their death bequeathed them to their heirs. Yorkshiremen journeyed regularly with their goods to this great textile concourse, and owned cloth booths there. Thus in 1518 William Hardy of Heptonstall in his will made the bequest of his booth at 'Saint Bartholomews juxta London'³ to his wife and children; in 1542 Henry Farrer of Halifax assigned to his son Brian his 'boith within Sancte Bartilmews in London, to be hade and holden to the saide Brian and to his heres and assignes for euer'.⁴ Others held stalls on lease, as for instance John Crossley of Huddersfield, who in 1562 made the following bequest:

'To my eldest sone, William . . . all my interest and tearme of yeares which I have, or ought to have, of and in one standinge or bowthe in the clothe faire called great Sainct Bartilmewes, nere west Smythefield of London.'⁵

This annual journey to the fair must have been a great event to the clothiers, who approached the capital with mixed feelings of wonder and fear, much akin to the emotions of the modern countryman when he makes his first visit to the metropolis.

¹ 'Halifax in the Days of Henry VIII', by J. Lister, in *Halifax Almanack*, 1913.

² Ashley, *Economic History*, I. ii. 214. See also *Encycl. Brit.*, 11th edition, iii. 450.

³ *Halifax Wills*, ed. by Clay and Crossley, p. 53.

⁴ *Ibid.*, i. 156.

⁵ *Ibid.*, i. 53 n.

Fears for the safety of their precious cloths might well be entertained in an age when the length, breadth, and weight of a cloth were fixed by law, and when these legal data were constantly being revised and amended. The clothier living away up in Yorkshire would have some difficulty in keeping abreast of the latest statutory demands, and so when he reached London he might with good cause entertain doubts about the legality of his pieces. Hence we find that in 1558 'dyvers clothiars of sundry partes of the realme, havinge repayred to this Barthylmews Fayre with a greate number of course clothes and karseys to be uttred and solde there do forbear to open their said clothes and put the same to sale, fearing they be not made according to the Statute ordeyned in this behalf'. In order to clear away such doubts, and to dispel the fears of the clothiers, the Privy Council called before it a number of those concerned, including, amongst others, 'John Sutclif of Hallyfax, John Hardy of the same, John Lyster of Manningham, William Lunsdale of Selby, Ollyver Brigges of Bewdeley (Co. Salop), who occupyeth in the Northe partes'. With these men the Privy Council conferred, the state of the Cloth Acts was considered, and every possible step taken to allay the fears of the clothiers.¹

The fair was an annual occurrence, and hence did not provide facilities for continuous intercourse between the provincial clothiers and the London traders. As the cloth trade grew, the capital became more and more important as a market for cloths made in the country. Clothiers wished to sell their wares to the people of London, or to London merchants for export. They needed, therefore, some more convenient channel through which their cloths could flow week by week into the hands of London buyers. The need was met by the institution of Blackwell Hall.² This Hall was a building in Basinghall Street, purchased by the Mayor and Commonalty of London in 1397 to serve as a market for country clothiers and drapers. Here, and here alone, countrymen were to expose and sell their cloths, and sales could take place only between Thursday noon and Saturday noon in each week. Strict rules were drawn up for the control of the market, and offenders punished by the con-

¹ Acts of the Privy Council, Aug. 23, 1558.

² Ashley, I. ii. 215, and Cunningham, *Growth*, i. 382.

fiscation of their goods.¹ As the commerce in cloth expanded, the importance of Blackwell Hall grew proportionately, since there was no relaxation of the monopoly of sale which the Hall possessed. Hence pieces were forwarded from every part of the country, on pack-horses or by sea, to this central sales-room, and in the seventeenth century special rooms were set apart for the produce of the various districts. There was a 'Northern Hall', which in 1622 contained over 5,000 pieces waiting to be sold; there was a 'Manchester Hall', full of 'fries' and 'cottons', whilst Wiltshire, Suffolk, and other parts of the country claimed their local 'Halls' (as the rooms were euphemistically called), each with its keeper or clerk.² Later in the century two other buildings were utilized as cloth markets, the 'Welch II' for coarse goods from the western areas, and Leaden Hall for the wares of East Anglia and the new draperies of Yorkshire. The country cloths, when ready for sale, were packed up in bundles suitable for carriage by pack-horses or for transmission by sea, and then the clothier either took them himself to the capital or, as was more frequently the case, dispatched them by a professional carrier.³ The goods were forwarded to some agent⁴ or factor in London, who took them to the Hall and there disposed of them, charging his client with a certain proportion of the receipts as commission. Those clothiers who accompanied their goods might have a stall of their own in the market, but during the seventeenth century the factor succeeded in encroaching upon the trade to such an extent as practically to forbid any sales by the producer. Bitter complaints were constantly being made of this monopoly and tyranny on the part of the middleman,⁵ and legislation attempted to keep him in check.⁶ But the factor was a necessary part of the industrial organization

¹ Early in the fifteenth century, drapers' and merchant tailors' companies obtained the right to search all cloth exposed for sale, and to mark it according to its size (Ashley, *op. cit.*, I. ii. 214).

² *D. S. P., Jas. I.*, cxxviii. 73-7.

³ In the seventeenth century there was a constant stream of carriers plying between Kendal, Wakefield, and London (*Kendal Corp. MSS., Hist. MSS. Comm., Report x*, pt. iv, p. 317).

⁴ See Surtees Soc., vol. lxxvii, p. 19. The Priestley family had a factor in Blackwell Hall. See also will of John Hollyred of Hallyfax, clothier, 1574 (copy in hands of Mr. J. Lister): 'I have in Blackwell Hall Foure score and one peces of Kerseyes, in the Hall that Mr. Gray kepes.'

⁵ See pamphlet extracts in Smith, *Memoirs of Wool*, vol. i, pp. 315-30.

⁶ Statute 8-q Will. III. c. 6.

of the century, and so he threw out of the needs of the many clothiers who used the London market for the disposal of their wares.

Blackwell Hall was taken advantage of by the State to facilitate the inspection of cloth in accordance with the various cloth laws, and several Acts declared that all goods going to London should be searched there.¹ Further, the cloth-dealing companies of the capital attempted to take advantage of the market to engross all trade into their own hands, and forbade any direct dealing between the country manufacturer and the consumer. Though never quite successful in this policy, the companies and the city authorities in unison could make matters exceedingly unpleasant and inconvenient for the outsider, especially by the levy of excessive hall dues and fees. This was particularly the case after the Restoration, and in 1664 the clothiers and merchants of Leeds petitioned the Commons, complaining that the city of London had increased 'ye ancient Hallage for ye entrance and pitcheinge' of the cloths, which obliged 'a pitcheinge lodgeing and long continuance of our clothes in Blackwell Hall and Leaden Hall', with consequently heavier charges, so that the petitioners did 'every day meet with new discouragement and inconveniences in their trade'.² The House of Commons tried to remedy these grievances, but the city quickly reimposed its heavy dues, and continued its attempt to 'make the foreigner pay'.³

The cloth sold in London might be for distribution in London or in other parts of England, amongst the poorer classes of the population. But English cloth, and with it Yorkshire cloth, had now become the most valuable article of foreign trade, just as English wool had been in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The export trade was now a very important factor in the textile industry, so important that any diminution of the foreign demand brought depression, unemployment, and distress upon large numbers of the English cloth-makers. During the Tudor period our fabrics found their way into almost every part of Europe. 'Bristow frizes, Welsh cottons, Manchester

¹ Rymer, *Foedera*, xx. 221-2.

² D. S. P., *Chas. II*, xciv. 82-6; also vol. 449, m. 14.

³ See pamphlets on wool (1678), Brit. Mus. 712. g. 16. (22). Yorkshire cloths were obliged to pay 8d. per pack (10 cloths) for hallage.

cottons and Northerens 'equally with the best qualities of white and coloured cloths, were exported to the Low Countries, to the various parts of High and Low Germany, to Muscovy, Russia and the Baltic area, to France, Spain, Italy, Barbary, Hungary, 'and contries beyond the same'.¹ In the seventeenth century the troops of Russia were dressed in English fabrics, and the gentlemen of Poland used to clothe their attendants with English cloth until, after the various wars of the early seventeenth century, they were too impoverished to be able to afford the rough but durable wares of England, and had to be content with the still cheaper fabrics of their own country and of Silesia.²

In this export trade the three great cloth areas shared. East Anglia was now essentially the home of the new draperies; in the West of England goods both of high and low quality were produced, and Yorkshire comprised the third important source of supply for the export trade. In 1623, a time of depression, the merchants of York claimed to have shipped more than 50,000 kerseys during the previous thirteen months,³ whilst in the famous lawsuit of 1638 a witness who was keeper of the ulnage seals declared that 80,000 kerseys were manufactured annually in the county, of which 60,000 were exported by way of York, Hull, Newcastle, Chester, London, and other ports.⁴

The Yorkshire ports naturally played the most important part in the exportation of the Yorkshire cloth. York had to a very large extent lost its industrial activity, but had developed its commerce instead, so that it was now, in the seventeenth century, the home of many merchants, a city renowned for its pleasant society, its venison pasties, its 'good fires, good chere, and good company'.⁵ Hull had developed considerably during the Tudor period,⁶ and was now the port and fort of the Humber. Its harbour had been renovated so as to give better

¹ *D. S. P., Eliz.*, xv. 67 (1560).

² Sellers, *Ordinances of the Eastland Merchants* (Camden Soc.), Intro., p. lix.

³ *D. S. P., Jas. I.*, cxxxviii. 120.

⁴ Evidence of J. Crabtree of Halifax, innkeeper, who 'keepeth the booke of the seales for the whole vicarage of Halifax'.

⁵ *Life of Marmaduke Rawdon of York* (Camden Soc., 1863), p. 84.

⁶ At the time of the Reformation, Hull sold all its church plate and jewels, and paved the town with the proceeds (*Calendar of State Papers*, vol. xii, pt. i, p. 481).

accommodation for the loading and unloading of ships. At the same time increased provision had been made to protect the town and shipping from the ravages of pirates and hostile fleets. Henry VIII had ordered the building of blockhouses and other fortifications,¹ and in the following century the scheme of defence had been extended, so that the port was now surrounded by strong walls, only to be entered by drawbridge and portcullis, and all bristling with arms.² Hull was now the 'Key of the North', and, as Fuller quaintly remarked, the key had been well mended and the wards of the lock much altered, for they succeeded in shutting out Charles I when the Civil War began.³ The trade of Hull was both coastal and foreign. The traffic with London and Newcastle was important, and ships left the Humber for most of the ports of Europe, especially those facing Hull across the North Sea. Cloth was one of the chief, if not the chief, articles of export. Grain⁴ from the basins of the Ouse and Trent, and lead⁵ from the mines of Derbyshire, also figured prominently at times in the bills of lading, and Hull was for many years the centre of the Greenland whaling industry,⁶ the northern market for fish, and the chief port to which wool was brought from the southern counties.

Now let us turn our attention to the men who were carrying on this foreign trade in Yorkshire cloth. The first fact to be noted is that they were Englishmen, and very often Yorkshiremen. Even as early as the thirteenth century English traders were engaged in foreign commerce, and it is probable that the importance of these men has been vastly underestimated by economic historians. But at that time the Englishman undoubtedly had to take second place to the alien. It was the

¹ *D. S. P., Eliz.*, cxi. 10.

² Baskerville's Tour, temp. Chas. II, *Portland MSS. (Hist. MSS. Comm.)*, p. 113. Celia Fiennes entered the town over a drawbridge.

³ Charles himself had spent over £1,600 on fortifying the town (*D. S. P., Chas. I*, xvii. 130 and 140; also xviii. 433).

⁴ *Harley MSS.*, vol. 306, ff. 26-8. Also *D. S. P., Eliz.*, cxix. 50 (1577), licence to mayor and burgesses of Hull to transport 20,000 qrs. of grain in twenty years.

D. S. P., Chas. II, vol. 265, f. 17 (1609). Just departed from Hull, three ships for Bordeaux, with coals, cloth, butter, &c. One ship for Holland, with lead, cloth, and rape seed. One for Hamburg, 'richly laden with cloth', and three other vessels preparing for Virginia.

⁶ Bigland, *Topographical and Historical Description of the County of York* (1812), pp. 508-9.

Italian and the Hansard who bought up the supplies of wool from the monasteries and at the big fairs, and exported it to the textile centres of Italy, Flanders, and Germany. High finance was in the hands of the Florentines, and the import trade in spices, silks, and general luxuries was carried on chiefly by foreigners.

With the reign of Edward III.¹ the high tide of alien commercial supremacy began slowly to ebb before the rise of a strong native mercantile class. This movement continued with much irregularity and frequent halts during the two subsequent centuries, until by the end of the Tudor period the alien influence had almost entirely disappeared, and English foreign trade was really 'active' and carried on by natives. In its early stages the battle was waged by the wool merchants, organized eventually in the Company of the Staple. In its later stages native cloth merchants played a prominent part and reaped the greater share of the benefits which accrued. Of the trading companies which then took up the control of English commerce, two in particular drew their export commodities from Yorkshire and traded largely in Yorkshire cloth. These were the Societies, Fellowships, or Companies of the Merchant Adventurers and the Eastland Merchants; in them the merchants of the county were enrolled; by them Yorkshire pieces were carried to the Continent.

The two companies were alike in that their chief export trade was in cloth, though the Merchant Adventurers exported only white cloths, whilst the Eastlanders could only traffic in coloured pieces. They were akin in that they were associations of men rather than of capital. They were not based on joint-stock principles. The company ordered the rules of life and the laws of trade, but had 'no banke nor common stocke, nor common factour to buy and sell for the whole companie, but every man tradeth apart and particularlie with his own stocke, and with his own factour or servaunt'. The companies differed in the market

¹ For details of the rise of the native merchant class, see Law, *The English Nouveaux-Riches in the Fourteenth Century* (Trans. Royal Hist. Soc., New Series, ix); Guiseppi, *Alien Merchants in England* (Trans. Royal Hist. Soc., New Series, ix); Cunningham, *Growth*, i. 290; Ashley, *Economic Organization of England*, chap. iv. See also Patent Rolls, 14 Ed. III, pt. iii, m. 55 d; Close Rolls, 13 Ed. III, pt. iii, m. 8.

which they supplied, having the bounds of their respective activities clearly mapped out in their charters, with one small area open equally to the members of both companies.

Of the two organizations, that of the Merchant Adventurers is the older and more important.¹ As internal trade developed in England, special trading classes grew up, such as the mercers, drapers, and grocers, with men earning their livelihood solely by the exchange of commodities. Some specialized in retail trade, whilst others devoted their attention to wholesale transactions. These wholesale traders formed the raw material out of which foreign merchants were evolved, and gradually there arose an important class of English merchants dealing with foreign ports. These men received favours from the English kings and from foreign rulers, such as the Count of Flanders. They built up trade centres abroad, especially in the Low Countries, and here they began to organize some common life and scheme of government. In 1407 a charter was granted to all English merchants trading abroad to erect and maintain proper means of government to watch over their interests and regulate their actions in foreign parts. This grant did not establish the Merchant Adventurers: it only gave powers of self-government to all English merchants when abroad, and in accordance with this grant local groups of merchants organized themselves and drew up common rules in various foreign towns during the fifteenth century.

Throughout that century, the adventurers, as these cloth merchants were now generally called, grew in strength, after many a hard fight against the Staplers, who exported wool, and the Hansards, whose trade in cloth was now seriously challenged by the Englishmen.² During this period there was also a movement towards concentration and centralization, and the various local organizations were being brought within the fold of one adventurers' society. In this unification of the forces of English traders abroad the London element predominated, and London merchants and mercers, organized in a fellowship,

¹ The following pages give only those details concerning the Adventurers which are necessary in order to understand the work of the Yorkshire merchants. See Wheeler, *A Treatise of Commerce* (1601), and Lingelbach, *The Merchant Adventurers of England* (1902), for a full treatment of the topic.

² For this early history see Lingelbach, *op. cit.*, preface.

succeeded in gaining the mastery over the whole body of traffic with the Low Countries. This control amounted to something approaching a monopoly, and by the end of the fifteenth century traders from the provincial ports were loud in their complaint of the manner in which the London organization of 'merciers and other merchants and adventurers' was imposing financial levies and trading disabilities on the foreign commerce of those who did not belong to the capital. The most famous of these protests was contained in the petition of 1496, in which the merchants from the outports railed against the men of London, who 'by confederacie made amonge theym self of their uncharitable and inordinate covetise for their singular profite and luere, contrarie to every Englissheman's libertie and to the libertie of the (foreign) Marte there . . . have contrarie to all lawe reason charite right and conscience, . . . made an Ordinaunce . . . that noe Englishman resortyng to the seyd Martes shall neither bye nor sell any godes . . . except he first componde and make fyne with the seyd feliship merchauntes of London . . . upon payn of forfeiture to the seyd feliship . . . of suche Merchandises godes or wares so by him bought or sold there'. This fine or entrance fee, amounting to £20, had been instrumental in crippling the trade of many provincial merchants, and the Yorkshire cloth exporters had suffered as much as any others engaged in the Netherlands traffic. In response to this petition, an Act was passed in which the London fellowship was confirmed in the power to levy a fine or entrance fee, but that fee was reduced to ten marks (£6 13s. 4d.).¹

This enactment was of great importance to the men of the outports, and York benefited considerably by the terms of the statute. Here the merciers had become a large and flourishing body, and had received a royal charter of incorporation in 1430. The merchant class grew up as a specialized branch of the Mercers' Company, and the merchants turned their attention to foreign trade. They traded with the Netherlands throughout the fifteenth century, and acted to some extent in harmony

¹ The London mercers and merchants had first levied this fine in the name of the fraternity of St. Thomas of Canterbury, and originally the levy was a quite small one. It had been subsequently increased, until it stood at £20 in the time of Henry VII. See Statute 12 Hen. VII, c. 6. Also Lingelbach, *op. cit.*, preface.

with merchants from other Northern ports.¹ In fact it seems to have been the custom at one time for the London merchants and mercers abroad to be organized under the control of one governor, and for the merchants and mercers of York, Hull, Beverley, Scarborough, and all other ports north of the Trent to be grouped together under another independent governor. During the fifteenth century this system fell into abeyance before the encroachments of the London organization, and the southern merchants rode roughshod over the interests of their northern rivals, to the great inconvenience of the latter. Eventually the men of York complained to Edward IV, who issued a proclamation in 1478 ordering the governor of the London merchants to mend his ways: 'From hensfurth ye (shall) demeane and intrete ye said mercers (of the Northern ports) in the parties beyonde the see with all favour and honestee accordyng to ye said auncient custumes . . . as ye lust to do us singler pleasor and woulde answer to us at your peryll.'² How much regard was paid to this command we do not know, but it is certain that the heavy financial levy continued to be imposed upon the Northern merchants and mercers until its reduction to ten marks by the statute of 1497.

With the granting of this cheaper privilege, the merchant class in York sprang forward into increased activity and larger operations. Numbers of mercers enrolled themselves in the ranks of the central organization, known by this time as the Fellowship of the Merchant Adventurers of England, and a local Court of Merchant Adventurers was added on to the York Company of Mercers. Eventually this wholesale traders' branch eclipsed the retail section, but there was never any separation into two bodies, and the retail trader and the wholesale merchant remained side by side in the same organization. Other ports soon had their Merchant Adventurers, organized in local courts, but also enrolled in the larger body.³

During the sixteenth century the growth of the society was continuous. Its membership increased, as did also the number of cloths which passed through the hands of its members. It

¹ Sellers, 'The Merchant Adventurers of York', *Brit. Assoc. Handbook*, 1909, p. 213.

² Quoted by Miss M. Sellers, *The Merchant Adventurers of York*: pamphlet published 1913 (York).

³ Sellers, *Brit. Assoc. Handbook*.

gained privileges abroad, and strengthened its position both in England and in foreign ports. The pieces exported were almost entirely white cloths, which were dyed and finished in the Low Countries, where they were said to provide employment to 20,000 persons in Antwerp and 30,000 in other parts of the land.¹ In the latter part of the century wars in the Low Countries caused complications, and necessitated frequent removals of the Company's head-quarters; but operations were extended nevertheless, and the trade with the Baltic and Germany shared with the Eastland Company. Hence in 1607 Wheeler was able to declare that 'the Merchant Adventurers do annually export at least 60,000 white cloths, worth at least £600,000, and of coloured cloths of all sorts—kersies, bayes, cottons, northern dozens, and other coarse cloths—more than 40,000, worth £400,000, in all £1,000,000 sterling'. Probably these figures are too large, for Wheeler was here defending the organization of which he was secretary.² But admitting this, the statement serves to show the greatness of this Tudor trading company.

In 1564 and 1586 new charters were granted by Elizabeth defining very clearly and comprehensively the scope and powers of the society, and arranging for its government and administration.³ As we see it at this time the company consisted 'of a great number of wealthy and well-experimented merchants dwelling in diverse great cities, maritime ports, and other parts of the realm, to wit—London, York, Norwich, Exeter, Ipswich, Newcastle, Hull, &c.', men who had 'linked and bound themselves together in company for the exercise of merchandise and seafare, trading in cloth, kersie and all other as well English as foreign commodities vendible abroad'.⁴ There were men from all parts of the country united in this fellowship, but not as shareholders of a joint-stock company. All obeyed the rules and ordinances of the central authority or of the local court. The members sent their cloths to Europe in the same ships, and might make partnerships among themselves. But the company

¹ *Newcastle Merchant Adventurers*, Preface, p. xxxvi. A letter (1564) states, 'The subjects of King Phillip doe gaine yerly by woll and wollen cloth that cometh out of England almost £600,000' (Brit. Mus., Sloane MSS., vol. 817, f. 21, quoted by Cunningham, ii. 224).

² Wheeler, *A Treatise of Commerce* (1601), p. 24.

³ Lingelbach, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-69.

⁴ Wheeler, *op. cit.*, pp. 10 and 19.

Itself was not an association of capital. It left each man to carry on his own business and conduct his own affairs, provided he kept to the stipulations laid down by those in authority. What then was the value of membership? In the first place, membership admitted a man to a share in a monopoly. The society had succeeded in breaking down the monopoly of the Steelyard, only to erect another one in its place. None but members of the company could export cloth to the special area of control allotted to the company, and any member guilty of selling the goods of a non-member was severely punished. This monopoly was often defied, especially in the seventeenth century, by 'interlopers' who competed with the real Adventurers, to the constant annoyance of the latter. Still, in spite of these men, the monopoly was on the whole well maintained. Secondly, the company had its head-quarters abroad and attempted to make commercial bargains with foreign Powers. This was a great part of the work of the Merchant Adventurers, who were sufficiently wealthy and strong to be able to extract favours, temporary or permanent, from the home Government, or from Continental rulers. Along with this the company tried to ensure to its members protection from violence and loss of goods when travelling by land or by sea. This was exceedingly important in those centuries of active commercial jealousy and international strife, and if the authorities could only provide safe escort by sea, and protect the merchants on land, they had met a very pressing need. Thirdly, the company did its best to regulate the markets with a view to preventing a general glut at any time or in any area. This was perhaps the most difficult task of all, since markets were opened and closed to English goods according to the diplomatic situation of the moment, and the company was forbidden by its very nature to turn to other parts of the world in order to get rid of wares which had been denied entry to the old markets. Also there was an absence of that intimate inter-relation between the producer and the merchant which is necessary to check over-production. The clothier went on making cloth with little regard to the state of the market, expecting the merchant to take his pieces as a matter of course. Hence the Adventurers failed to avert many serious trade depressions, due either to inflated supply

or to some sudden prohibition on the part of a European government.

The Fellowship traded by special licence to a certain part of Europe. Its territorial limits were the mouth of the Somme on the one extreme and the Skaw on the other. Between these points the society was given an absolute monopoly of English trade, whilst it shared on equal terms with the Eastland Merchants the trade of Denmark (Copenhagen and Elsinore excepted), Jutland, Silesia, Moravia, Lubeck, Wismar, Rostock, Stettin, Stralsund, and the Oder mouth.¹ The company was a fellowship of English merchants and of Englishmen alone. No alien could qualify for membership, and no Englishman married to a foreign wife or holding real property abroad could claim admission. Further, entry could be obtained only on terms akin to those which regulated admission to the craft gilds. A person might be made an honorary member; he might purchase admission by paying a high redemption fee; he might gain access on the grounds of patrimony when he attained the age of twenty-one years; or, lastly, he might enter through the ordinary gateway of apprenticeship.² A youth who desired to be an Adventurer became apprenticed to some free brother of the company at the age of sixteen, and served for a period of eight years, during which time he attended his master's business both at home and abroad. Then, armed with his certificate of fitness and 'dew service', he presented himself at the next Court, held at some trading centre abroad.³ Here he took the oath, paid his entrance fee, purchased his livery, and became a recognized freeman of the Fellowship. He was not yet full-grown, however, for a maximum limit was fixed to the quantity of his trade for fifteen years. In each of the first three years he could not export more than 400 cloths; in the fourth year not more than 450, and then the maximum increased 50 cloths per annum, until at his fifteenth year he was permitted to export 1,000 pieces.⁴ Also for the first seven years he might keep one apprentice, from the seventh to the twentieth year he might take two, and after that the number was limited to three.⁵ Aided by appren-

¹ M. Sellers, *Ordinances of the Eastland Merchants*, pp. xvi-xvii.

² *Brit. Assoc. Handbook*, York, 1906, p. 221.

³ Lingelbach, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2

men and journeymen, he was to devote his energies to trade in cloth, and this trade was almost entirely wholesale. The mercer element in the organization still survived in the provincial branches, but the division between the wholesale trader and the retailer was quite distinctly marked. At York, for instance, it was ordained that there must be no cutting up of cloth for purposes of sale by merchants, no keeping of an open shop or 'shew house'. Members were also forbidden to stand at the corners of the street or in other men's shops, or frequent any 'comon Inn' where chapmen were wont to resort, but at the same time they were prohibited from hawking their wares, or from keeping any shops in the country districts.¹ In place of these practices, the Merchant Adventurers of York had a hall and here the merchant was ordered to make his purchase from the clothiers who came to this market with their wares: 'No brother of this fellowship shall hereafter go to se or buye anye clothe broughte to this Cittye to be sold in no place but in our Hall therefore appoynted, in paine of a fine.'² The punishment for infringement of these regulations was generally confiscation of the goods concerned, and the records of the Newcastle Merchant Adventurers show that such confiscations were of frequent occurrence. The company also fixed the dates of sailings, and arranged them so that the consignments should reach the Continent in time for the four large cloth fairs which took place each year. The ships sailed in as large numbers as possible, accompanied by a convoy, provided the Government could spare a frigate or two.

The affairs of the Company as a whole were administered by a central executive, which had its head-quarters, not in London, but abroad. The centre of the association migrated from place to place during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, impelled chiefly by political dangers and commercial rivalries. Bruges, Antwerp, and Emden were in turn the centres of the trade, and in 1564 the Burgomaster of Hamburg invited the Adventurers to make that town their head-quarters.³ Hamburg seemed a doubtful centre, but those in authority decided to test its value as a market, so in 1567 they ordered each port to

M. Sellers, *Brit. Assoc. Handbook*, p. 223.
Cunningham, *Growth*, ii. 224-7.

² *Ibid.*, p. 224.

dispatch cargoes to that city. The letter to York stated that 'of late the Citie of Hamborowe have at our speciali instance and sewte graunted to us divers goodly privileges upon hope yt we shulde occupie and use somme trade thither, and for that purpose have according to their grant prepared a howse for us'. Therefore the Court requested the merchants of York to engage in some trade with the Elbe port, and ordered 'that ye first four shippes which shalbe laden aftar the last daye of Marche, . . . shalbe laden and departe for and to the said Citie of Hamborowe'.¹ The venture was successful and the trade soon settled on Hamburg. Here, with minor temporary migrations to Stade and Middelburg, the Adventurers stayed throughout the seventeenth century, and became known generally as the Hamburg Merchants.² At these head-quarters the real government of the company was to be found. There was a Governor and a Court of twenty-four Assistants, chosen by the General Court of the Fellowship. In the hands of this elected Court the real legislative and executive power rested. 'It not only made the Statutes and Ordinances but it was also entrusted with the duty of enforcing them. It administered the general affairs of the society, represented its interests with the Government and with strangers, and maintained order and discipline among the members of the Fellowship.'³ The decrees of the Central Court were obligatory upon merchants of all the local districts; even London received its orders from this source, and the Court had almost complete power in the selection of the officials of the local branches.⁴

Local branches of Merchant Adventurers were to be found in all the large ports. In the case of Newcastle, the Adventurers claimed entire independence of the central body, and declared that they were in no manner subservient to the Merchant Adventurers of England, an assertion of autonomy which was the cause of long and acrimonious quarrels between Newcastle and the larger organization. York, Hull, Bristol, Ipswich, &c., all had branches which were admittedly under the control of the central authority, and were ruled by the Court of Assistants which sat abroad. This subordination was the outcome of the

¹ M. Sellers, *Brit. Assoc. Handbook*, p. 218.

² Cunningham, *op. cit.*, pp. 228-9.

Lingelbach, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

encroachments which were made by the central body during the fifteenth century, and was none the less complete even when the local branches had obtained considerable powers by means of royal charters. The branch at York is an excellent illustration of this. Here the Merchant Adventurers' organization, evolving from the Company of Mercers, had been deprived of its independence abroad by the growth of the national Fellowship. In 1581 a charter of incorporation was obtained from Elizabeth. After lamenting the alleged decayed state of commerce in York, the charter gave very considerable powers to the 'Society of the Merchant Adventurers of the City of York' (*societas mercatorum aventurarum civitatis Ebo:*) for controlling all men exercising the art or mystery of merchant or mercer within the city and its suburbs. Thus the Merchant Adventurers of York were to control both the internal and external trade of their city.¹

This control was to be in the hands of a Court, consisting of a Governor and twelve Assistants, who were to be elected annually, and who would make laws and regulations binding upon all under their sway, with power to fine or imprison those who were guilty of disobedience.² The Court enforced the eight years' apprenticeship, forbade illicit trading amongst the merchants and mercers, repelled the invasion of interlopers, insisted on the wearing of livery, and generally ordered and controlled the occupation, morals, and manners of its members. But although among these important local powers, the charter was very careful to keep the provincial body in a position of subservience to the central Court of the Merchant Adventurers of England. The Governor and his Deputy were to be members of the larger company, and the Central Court had a voice in the election of these men. Apprentices at the end of their period of service were compelled to go to the foreign Court to receive their freedom, and decrees from head-quarters had precedence over local by-laws.³ Thus the society at York, whilst possessing considerable powers of self-government, had to bow to the commands of the larger body.

The Eastland Merchants were very similar in their aim and organization to the Merchant Adventurers, though their company

¹ Gross, *Gild Merchant*, vol. ii, p. 282.

² M. Sellers, *op. cit.*, pp. 221-2.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 222; Lingelbach, pp. 67-8.

was not of such ancient standing, and was certainly much smaller in the scale of its operations. Trade with the Baltic ports had grown up during the fifteenth century in spite of the opposition of the Hansards, and English merchants carried cloth there, bringing back corn, flax, hemp, timber, and the other commodities which the Baltic area could supply. The story of this trade is obscure until the granting of a charter by Elizabeth in 1579. This charter was bestowed upon the 'Governour, Assistants and Fellowship of the Marchaunts of Eastland', in order to help these 'expert and exerceysed marchaunts in their lawfull and honest trade' and to restrain those unskilled and interloping traders who, as ever, were said to be degrading the fair fame of English commerce abroad. The company resembled that of the Merchant Adventurers in its general structure and in most of its details. It had its well-defined geographical limits; Norway, Sweden, Poland, Letto, the Gulf of Pomerania, and the islands within the Sound were closed to all Englishmen who were not free of the company. Thus Eastlanders held control over such ports as Danzig, Elbing, Braunsberg, Königsberg, and Revel on the east coast of the Baltic, and Elsinore and Copenhagen in Denmark. They were forbidden, on the other hand, to trade in Holstein, Hamburg, or the Elbe mouth, these being the preserves of the Adventurers, but were given free passage through these parts; finally, one expanse comprising much of the south and the west coast of the Baltic was open to members of both companies on equal terms.¹

Like the Merchant Adventurers, the Eastland Company had its Central Court, consisting of a Governor, his Deputy, and twenty-four Assistants, but this Court was held in London, and not abroad, with the result that the power and the government of the organization fell largely into the hands of London merchants, much to the dissatisfaction of those from the outports. This Central Court had power to issue 'Statutes, Lawes, Constitucyons, and Ordinances' binding on the whole Fellowship, and was able therefore to assert a large measure of authority over the rank and file. In practice it succeeded in establishing an autocracy, placed the ordinary member, and especially the provincial member, in a position of insignificance, and virtually

Ordinances of Eastland Merchants, pp. xi and 147; also p. xiv.

destroyed the value of his vote.¹ The officials were surrounded with pomp, circumstance, and ceremony; no criticism was allowed from members, and any merchant who was found scoffing at the Court or its members was fined £5. This Central Court issued ordinances of every conceivable kind; elaborate codes of etiquette and ethics were drawn up, and all fighting, reviling, indecent speeches, tangling, lewd communications, and other lapses from grace were punished by severe fines. The Court had large financial powers; it could levy dues of various kinds, and therefore placed taxes on the person who imported, the merchandise he brought with him, and the vessel in which the goods were carried. A stint was established, which limited the amount of goods each member could export, and the Central Court fixed the dates at which shipments could take place from the English ports.² At times this restriction weighed heavily on the outports, as, for instance, in April 1625, when the merchants of Hull and York addressed the following petition to the Privy Council: 'At a generall Court of the Eastland Company holden at London in februarie last, it was agreed by the Merchants of London and the coast Townes that the first time or season for shipping of cloath into the Eastland this yeare from Hull and Neweastle should be the 21st of March past and the last of April instant, And that no goods should be put aboarde their shippes for the Eastlande after these tymes upon a great penaltie. The Petitioners had not dared shipp at that time ' because of the Dunkirkers who were hanging off the coast, and therefore they did not dispatch their cloths in the time allowed, for want of a convoy. Now the time for shipping was past, but the wares of the Yorkshiremen still lay at the port, and could not be dispatched for fear of the 'great penaltie' which would be inflicted by the Central Court of the Company. The petitioners, therefore, asked the Privy Council for permission to ship their goods and make the journey, in spite of the Company's regulation to the contrary.³ All these points serve to illustrate the authoritarian nature of the Eastland Company's government; in fact,

In 1616 it was declared that 'the power of ruling the whole company, making Bylaws and appointing officers, is by the Charter vested in ye Court of Assistants only, and if all ye generality of ye Company were present, they could have no voices in any question' (ibid., p. 136).

Ibid., p. xxiii.

³ *D. S. P., Chas. I*, vol. 521, p. 33 (April 1625)

the ordinary unofficial member was 'hampered by many restrictions, his speech curtailed, his manners regulated, his morals supervised', by an oligarchic Court which imposed taxation without allowing any measure of representation.¹

The Eastland Merchants, like the fellow Company, had their local courts and branch organizations, but here again the power of the central authority was strongly in evidence. The charter of 1579 allowed courts to be established 'as well within some convenyente place within our cyttie of London, or els where within our domynyons as also within the said Realmes and domynyons of the Easte partes afforesaid', i.e. at the outports in this country or in the foreign centres of trade.² York, Hull, and Newcastle, which were strongholds of the Eastland traffic, soon had their local bodies, but these provincial communities were kept under the thumb of the London assembly. The local courts were administered by a deputy, aided by a secretary and beadle, and their work was purely administrative, devoid of any legislative power. The Central Court made laws and ordinances without the knowledge or consent of the districts, and then ordered the branches to see that they were properly administered. The London governors placed their nominees in the local offices, levied impositions, regulated the times of shipping and the quantity of goods to be exported by the provincial merchants. Apprentices were compelled to journey to London in order to take up their freedom, and almost the whole of the money paid in entrance fees in the districts had to be forwarded to headquarters. Occasionally, however, the northern Courts obtained concessions, as for instance when the London executive consented not to admit any northerner to the freedom unless he held a certificate or testimonial from a northern Court,³ and in 1681 the Londoners declared, in a letter to York, 'we have lately denyed some from Leeds their admission for want of your certificates'.⁴ But such concessions were small, and in both the companies the central authority possessed large powers of jurisdiction over the districts, powers which, as we shall see, the outports strongly resented.

¹ M. Sellers, *Eastland Merchants*, pp. xxii and lxxii.

² Ibid., p. 144.

³ *D. S. P., Chas. I.*, cccvii. 73-4 (1635).

⁴ Quoted by M. Sellers, *Eastland Merchants*, p. lxxxiii.

In these big trading companies the exporters of Yorkshire cloth were enrolled.¹ Hull and York had their local branches in each company, between which harmonious relations existed, especially during the second half of the seventeenth century. This was natural, for their interests were allied whilst their spheres of action were different, and hence they were not to any great extent in competition with each other. The Eastland Merchants had special entrance fees for Merchant Adventurers, who were admitted on paying a fine of 40 marks (£13 6s. 8d.), whereas other men were charged £20 for admission. Many merchants were members of both companies. In 1661 the Eastland Merchants of York numbered eighty members, of whom fifty-four were Merchant Adventurers also. By being a member of both companies the merchant possessed the right to exploit the whole field of the North Sea and the Baltic. Occasionally the companies held joint meetings, generally of an extraordinary nature, and at times they had joint officials, both having the same beadle, and with the Deputy of the Eastlanders also acting as Governor of the Adventurers in York from 1646 to 1698.²

The chief consideration which these Yorkshire cloth merchants had at heart was the development of their northern trade. In pursuing this object they found themselves faced with two great difficulties, namely, (1) dangers on sea, and the opposition of foreign powers, (2) the competition of London rivals, and the despotism of their central organization. The first of these obstacles received a great deal of attention from the central executive, both societies doing their utmost to gain concessions from foreign powers with whom they came in contact, and to protect shipping from attacks at sea. The second was the cause of long and bitter quarrels between the northern merchants and their southern rivals. The Central Court of the Merchant Adventurers was largely under the control of London merchants, although its meeting-place was abroad, and thus both

The two companies embraced practically the whole of the Yorkshire merchant class. Sons of the best-known wealthy families were constantly enrolled as apprentices, and entering into commercial life. Ralph Cosby in 1684 went to London, and became a freeman of both companies. *Eastland Merchants*, pp. xxxv-xxxvi. In December 1651 the Adventurers and Eastlanders of York held a joint meeting to protest against the seizure of some ships at Rotterdam (*Eastland Merchants*, p. xxxiii).

companies were ruled by a limited number of rich metropolitan traders. As one writer complained (1585), in lamenting the temporary stagnation of Hull, 'The merchants are tyed to companies, the heads whereof are citizens of London, which make ordinances beneficiall to themselves, but hurtfull and chargeable to others in ye country'.¹ The northerners often objected to the rulings of the central power, and either at their individual local courts or in joint meetings of the various branches gave utterance to their grievances against the autocrats at head-quarters. York was the leader in the fight against the London Eastland Merchants, and succeeded in obtaining some small concessions, though it failed in its greatest struggle (1663-80), when it attempted to procure a local legislature.² The Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle, who claimed independence of the national body in domestic affairs, led a similar revolt against the government of the Merchant Adventurers of England. All this antagonism sprang from a sense of bitter rivalry and opposition against the London merchants, who were accused of damaging northern trade alike in England and abroad. We have already noted the existence of this struggle in the fifteenth century, and subsequent years brought no greater degree of harmony or goodwill. In 1548 the Newcastle Merchant Adventurers decreed that no man 'should latt no loftes, seellers nore housses to no Londyners nor straungers', or 'from hensfurth bye no maner of marchaundice of any Londyner nor of none other straunger'.³ Some years later a writer from Hull lamented that 'by means of ye said companies, all the trade of merchants is drawn to London'.⁴ During the seventeenth century this feeling rose to great heights of bitterness, and was the cause of constant demonstrations of antagonism between the northern ports and the capital. In 1651 the merchants of York convened a general meeting of their fellows from Newcastle, Hull, and Leeds. At this conference it was decided to 'joyne in petitioning the councell for trade agaynst the ffayres and marts held by the Londoner, that noe Londoner

¹ *D. S. P., Eliz.*, clxxvii. 56.

² *Eastland Merchants*, pp. lxxvii and lxxx; also Cunningham, *op. cit.*, ii. 242 and 242 n.

³ *Newcastle Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 51 and 61.

⁴ *D. S. P., Eliz.*, clxxvii. 56 (1585).

directly or indirectly shall come or send to keepe any fayres
 mart on the north side of Trent . . . chiefly because the
 northern Traders are exceedingly prejudiced by their coming
 one, they haveing layd their moneys and creditt to furnish
 the countrie. Soe that by these flayres the Londoner ingroseth
 most all the trade of the northern partes, and in equity
 and reason the benefitt of trade should be equally disposed into
 the vaines of the commonwealth'.¹ Similar sentiments were
 expressed in a letter written in March 1655 by the merchants
 of York and Hull, requesting Adam Baynes, M.P. for Leeds,
 to procure a convoy for a cargo of cloth. The letter concluded
 by urging Baynes to prompt action, and declared 'If at the day
 prefixed wee demurr to saile for want of Convoy! its 100 to one
 that the Londoners will be at the Markett before us . . . and if
 they be, . . . it will tend very much to the prejudice not onely
 of us that are Adventurers, but alsoe of the Northern Clothiers.
 Wee, Like little fishes, are swallowed up by a great whale! London
 hath almost ingrossed all the traid of this Nation into their
 one hands, specially for goods importable, more's the pitty!'²
 Antagonism towards the Southron was a sentiment which
 not northern merchants could share. But this unanimity did
 not prevent the existence of feuds, at times almost as bitter,
 between the two Yorkshire mercantile centres, York and Hull.
 Hull possessed a good strategic position on the Humber, and
 could control the trade which passed inland, either for the
 use of Trent. The port had been exceptionally favoured by
 Henry VIII,³ and Elizabeth's minister Cecil frequently granted
 further privileges. In 1592 Hull attacked the fairs which had
 been granted to Gainsborough,⁴ and then set to work to check
 the growth of Grimsby and other ports at which southern mer-
 chants entered the north country. So successful was this
 campaign that in December 1592 the Privy Council ordered
 that from henseforthe no marchant either of the Cittie of
 London or of any other Cittie, towne, or place within the realme

Newcastle Merchant Adventurers, i. 166-7, March 25, 1651.

Baynes Correspondence (Brit. Mus.), xi. 225, Leeds, March 1, 1654-5.

Henry VIII, Calendar of State Papers, vol. v, p. 1139 (22), 1532. Grant

Mavor and Burgesses that no stranger shall sell or buy merchandise to
 a stranger within the borough, except at fair time, on pain of forfeiture
 of the goods.

Acts of Privy Council, June 14, 1592.

shall carry convey or transport . . . any kindes or sortes of marchandise (coles and milnstones only excepted) to any porte, creeke, or haven within the Northerne partes of this realme of England between Boston and Hartlepoole, . . . unless he be first admitted into the incorporation of the towne of Hulle'.¹ Then came the encroachment upon the liberties of York and its merchants. So heavy were the levies imposed upon the traders from the county town and their goods² that in 1623 the men of York petitioned the Privy Council for relief against 'the grievance and wrong done unto them by the maior and burgesses of the Towne of Kingston-upon-Hulle'. It appears that Hull was attempting to monopolize the import trade in corn, and to exclude York from any share in that trade, by engrossing and forestalling all corn which entered the Humber. Further, when York traders, who had exported over 50,000 kerseys in thirteen months, brought back corn in return, the Mayor of Hull refused to allow the grain to pass up the river, but insisted upon its being sold to men of Hull; for which reason, declared the petitioners, the corn market of York was empty, and the cloth trade discouraged.³ This was only one of many occasions on which Hull attempted to cripple some part of the trade of York, and to control the commerce of the county. During the latter part of the century the Eastland Merchants of the two ports were generally on unfriendly terms. Hull was loyal and obedient to the decrees of the Central Court, whilst York was in a 'chronic state of dissatisfaction' and revolt.⁴ York desired local self-government, and disliked having to pay its dues and impositions to head-quarters through Hull. These and other factors combined to keep aflame the animosity between the two commercial centres.

Lastly, the merchants of the two historic ports looked with unfriendly eyes upon the traders who came from other parts of their own county. As quoted in a previous chapter, Hull complained in the reign of James I that 'a set of young adventurers had lately set up at Leeds and other places amongst the clothiers, who at little or no charges buy and engross as they

¹ Acts of Privy Council, December, 22, 1592.

² *Lansdowne MSS., Burghlev Papers*, vol. cx, f. 65.

D. S. P., Jas. I., cxxxviii. 120.

⁴ *Eastland Merchants*, ed. M. Sellers, Preface, pp. lxvi-lxviii.

please, to the great hurt of the merchants and inhabitants of this town'.¹ These West Riding merchants generally sprang from local families of clothiers. The father would be a clothier, probably on a rather large scale of business, selling his cloths in the market at Leeds, or at Blackwell Hall and Bartholomew Fair. Thanks to the father's energies and thrift, the son was able to become apprenticed to some merchant, and in time set up as a fully qualified merchant and member of the trading companies, taking the wares of the West Riding to foreign parts. One instance of this is seen in the rise of the Denisons, a family prominent in the history of Leeds. George Denison, born in 1626, lived at Woodhouse, and engaged in the occupation of clothier. His son, Thomas, became a merchant and member of the Merchant Adventurers; Thomas's son in time followed the same career, and was elected Mayor of Leeds in 1727 and 1731.² Other branches of the family had a similar history. The Denison family had its origins in clothiers' cottages. Its members afterwards numbered three knights, a baron, a viscount, a Speaker of the House of Commons, a judge, a colonial governor, and a bishop, not to mention Mayors of Leeds and lesser dignities. The history of other families is largely a repetition of the above story; and this line of development accounts in part at least for the rise of the Armitages, the Jacksons, the Metcalfes, the Walkers, the Wades, and other families which have played a large part in the economic and political life of Leeds.

These West Riding merchants were naturally in closer touch with the cloth-producing area than the traders from the port towns, and a large proportion of the traffic in broad cloths and kerseys fell into their hands. They were, however, compelled to join the trading companies, and enrol themselves as Adventurers or Eastlanders, or both, ranking themselves along with their 'bretheren at Yorke'.³ But the aristocratic merchants of York did not welcome this upstart breed of traders. The Leeds merchants were not willingly recognized, and as no new member could be admitted to the local residencies without the consent of the members of that branch, the York merchants

Pamphlet, by John Ramsden, quoted in Hadley's *History of Hull*, p. 115.

Thoresby Soc. publications, xv. 252.

Haynes Correspondence, xi. 225.

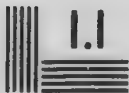


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were able to bar the entrance of this new blood. In 1681, for instance, the London Court of Eastland Merchants informed the York branch that it had lately refused admission to a number of men of Leeds, because these candidates had not been able to produce a certificate of approval from the York officials.¹ Similarly, the merchants residing in York did not approve of these West Riding merchants living in the cloth area, instead of sharing in the social life and civic expenses of York. In 1654, therefore, when the traders of Leeds were seeking to make some arrangements with their brethren of York, probably about the next cargo of cloth, the Eastland Merchants of the county town haughtily replied 'that if y^e Merchants of Leeds and other y^e live in Clothing Townes will come and inhabitt in port Townes, we will joyne with them in anything y^e may conduce to y^e good of this country'.²

Such were the two institutions which controlled the export trade in Yorkshire cloth at the end of the sixteenth and throughout the first half of the seventeenth century. They gained many victories abroad, and opened up new markets for English commercial enterprise. The cloths which they exported from Yorkshire and the northern counties were not of the best quality, and this was recognized by the state when levying customs. Thus, in the later years of the reign of Elizabeth, the customs were fixed at 6s. 8d. for a whole cloth of assize. This was a heavy burden on cloths of small value, even when three, four, five, or six pieces were counted as equivalent to one whole cloth. In 1591, therefore, the merchants of Newcastle, York city and county, and other northern centres, along with those of the western counties, complained of the excessive rate which was levied on the cloths of these parts.³ They asserted that a customs levy of 6s. 8d. was a very heavy impost on fabrics made of coarse wools and low in price. The case was referred to the Lord Treasurer, who admitted the justice of the complaint, and recommended that the customs dues should be reduced by two shillings per whole cloth for all these coarse northern cloths, whilst one piece in every five should be free of

¹ *Eastland Merchants*, Preface, p. lxxxiii.

² *Ibid.*, p. 76, October 30, 1654.

³ *D. S. P., Eliz.*, ccxxxix. 54, June 1591.

an impost, being counted as a wrapper for the other four. These recommendations were carried out, and the northern merchants paid reduced customs, with the 'gift of the fifth both for a wrapper' free of duty. The concession was of great value to the trade, and the merchants stoutly resisted any attempt to abolish this preferential treatment when subsequent revisions of customs were being made.¹

Foreign trade was beset by many dangers, not least of which was that of capture by pirates, or by the ships of some hostile country. Security at sea was a luxury seldom enjoyed by Tudor and Stuart merchants, who really were 'adventurers' in a double sense of the term. Piracy was rampant, and powerful associations of pirates patrolled the North Sea and the Channel.² Throughout earlier centuries, cargoes of wool, cloth, lead, and coal had been seized on the high seas, and the coast towns and villages were always liable to be raided by a horde of these wild men of the sea. Or if the pirates were subdued, the ships of a hostile country were scarcely less dangerous. England was generally on unfriendly terms with some Continental power, and this enmity expressed itself in regular seizures of goods and vessels. Even if no state of actual hostilities existed, political and commercial rivalries were sufficiently strong to justify an attack on a foreign ship and the confiscation of its cargo. Instances of such occurrences are abundant. Thus, in 1319, when merchants of Beverley, along with other traders, loaded three ships of Flanders, then lying at Hull, with cloths of Beverley, sacks of wool, woolfells, and other merchandise to the value of £4,000. This rich cargo was on its way to Flanders, when 'certain armed malefactors', subjects of Count Robert of Flanders, attacked the ships, captured them, and escorted ships and cargo to Flanders, where they shared out the booty. The English government repeatedly made representations to the Count on behalf of the Beverley merchants, but without avail. Edward II, therefore, following the regular custom, retaliated by ordering the seizure of the goods of Flemish merchants who were then in England. Action was stayed for

¹ See revival of question, *D. S. P., Jas. I*, cxi. 69-72.

² Cunningham, *Growth*, i. 301. Also Clive Day, *History of Commerce* (1907),

a time, as the Count promised to send envoys to England to settle the affair. But the envoys never came, and so Edward ordered the seizure of a large quantity of Flemish merchandise, and imprisoned several Flemings until the Count adequately recompensed the English merchants.¹ Similar occurrences were frequent throughout the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, and bore witness to the dangers to commerce, whether coastal or foreign. In 1577 a writer complained of the great prevalence of pirates up and down the coast, which was preventing fishermen and merchants from venturing out of harbour.² In the last years of the sixteenth century Dunkirkers haunted the Yorkshire coast, chasing the coal, cloth, and fishing fleets and racking the nerves of the whole sea-going population;³ later, in 1625, the Eastland Merchants dare not put out to sea with their cloth ships, for fear of the Dunkirkers who were hanging outside the mouth of the Humber.⁴ England still had no adequate navy, and during the various wars of the seventeenth century the Dutch and other enemies were able to inflict severe blows upon the country by harassing its mercantile ventures.

Merchants tried to fortify themselves against these dangers in many ways. The ports occasionally acted on their own initiative, and in 1577 Hull armed certain ships for the purpose of stamping out piracy. The attempt was attended with success, and the ships captured Lancelot Greenwell, a notorious pirate who had given Hull merchants a vast amount of trouble.⁵ But generally the merchants looked to the government to provide protection. They paid Ship Money, customs, and other dues, and therefore they expected in return some measure of security in their trade. The northern merchants voiced the general opinion when, in 1651, they asked 'that in regard wee pay so greate custome and excise, wee may bee constantly supplied with convoy and secured from the great danger of the enemyes, and that the merchants

¹ Close Rolls, 13 Ed. II, m. 14, October 24, 1319.

² *D. S. P., Eliz.*, Addenda, xxv. 11 (1577).

³ *Ibid.*, cclxx. 100.

⁴ *D. S. P., Chas. I.*, dxxi. 33.

⁵ Ordinances of Privy Council, October 20, 1577. Piracy was almost unknown among the learned professions, and a sound business investment. Thus in 1527 the Abbot of Whithby, two gentlemen, and a number of other men prominent in the affairs of the East Riding were the financiers of a famous piratical band (*Yorks. Arch. and Topogr. Journal*, ii. 247).

... have some reasonable reparacions for their losses at sea by
 ... from tyme to tyme, in respect of the greate tax they pay
 ... the maintenance of the navie'.¹ Hence, when the periodical
 ... were ready to be dispatched, the merchants of the
 ... from which the consignments were to go wrote to the
 ... government, asking for a convoy, or for some other guarantee
 ... safety. Prior to the existence of a national navy, the govern-
 ... allowed the merchant ships to take soldiers with them to
 ... provide the necessary defence. For instance, in 1483, the
 ... merchants of Hull were granted permission 'to take up as many
 ... soldiers and mariners as shalbe requisite for the defense
 ... and Waughting (wafting) of certain shippes, now being at poort
 ... Hull, laden and chardged with Wolles and Wollfelles to the
 ... staple of Calais'.² With the improvement and extension of the
 ... navy, it occasionally became possible to spare men-of-war, and
 ... throughout the seventeenth century ships were detailed to act
 ... convoys to the mercantile fleets. The northern merchants,
 ... in 1625 had missed the market for want of a convoy, were
 ... compensated in the following year, when three ships were sent
 ... to waft the cloathe fleets of the Northeren partes bound unto
 ... places of securities', and also 'to waft the said shippes home
 ... line in their retourne'.³ This grant of a convoy was repeated
 ... several occasions, the most famous of which was that of 1630.
 ... that year, at the earnest petition of the cloth merchants of
 ... Hull, York, and Newcastle, a vessel called the *Reformation*
 ... was sent, under the command of Sir Henry Mervyn, to convoy
 ... sixteen ships, laden with cloth, to the Low Countries, Hamburg,
 ... and the Eastlands.⁴ This was a large cargo, comprising the
 ... wares of Adventurers and Eastlanders, and the ports were jubilant
 ... at the prospect of a safe and profitable journey. The Mayor
 ... and Corporation of Hull wrote to the Privy Council, thanking
 ... them for the favour granted,⁵ and the authorities of York
 ... followed suit, expressing 'the comforte . . . received by his
 ... Most Excellent Ma^{ties} gracyous and royall favour, in that it
 ... eased his Ma^{ty} in our greate extremity, after sundry losses
 ... by pyratys, and when wee had noe power of ourselves to help

¹ March 25, 1651 (*Newcastle Merchant Adventurers*, i. 166).

² September 16, 2 Rich. III, Harleian MSS., 433, ff. 159 b and 187 b.
D. S. P., Chas. I, xxv. 22 and 47.

³ *Ibid.*, clxiii. 59.

⁴ *Ibid.*, clxvii. 3.

ourselves, that then his Ma^{ty} out of his princely disposition¹ should send Sir Henry Mervyn.¹

The mercantile fleet set out from Hull on May 18, 1630, under the aegis of Mervyn. On the 21st the men of Hull sent their letter of thanks to the Privy Council, and were congratulating themselves on the assured success of the expedition. Imagine, therefore, their dismay and surprise when they saw some of the ships returning up the Humber the following day. The story was quickly told, how, soon after getting well out to sea, Sir Henry had sighted a Spanish warship, and had set off to the north-east in pursuit, instead of keeping to the straight course for Holland. The merchants and mariners had protested angrily against this diversion, whereupon Sir Henry calmly replied 'That if they would not go his way, they could go their own'.² The merchants had argued in vain, and Mervyn eventually left them, to follow up the Spaniard. Some ships put back into port, and two of them were lost on this sad return journey. The others evidently continued their voyage, though with what result we do not know.³

During the period of the Civil War, the Commonwealth, and the wars with the Dutch, the state of the high seas was more dangerous than ever. Hence, year after year the Yorkshire merchants inundated their Members of Parliament or the Government with requests for convoys. These letters are so full of energy and interest that one is worthy of quotation:⁴

'Leedes,

'1st. March, 1654-5.

'(To Adam Baynes, M.P. for Leeds),

Honoured Sir,

'Wee, whose names are hereunto subscribed, make it our humble request on the behalfe of our selves and other merch^{ts} of Yorke and Hull, that you would be pleased to procure us from the State a good Convoy, to be if possible at Hull the last day of this moneth, to take charge of Thomas Robinson's shipp and goods, (and his lugg alsoe if need bee for one), for the Porte

¹ *D. S. P., Chas. I.*, clxviii. 27.

² *Ibid.*, clxvii. 7.

³ In 1627 four York merchants had their vessels seized by the Dunkirkers, entailing a loss of £600. They therefore asked Buckingham for permission to take compensation from a ship of Rouen, which had been captured by some Englishmen (*D. S. P., Chas. I.*, lxxxiv. 29).

⁴ *Baynes Correspondence*, xi. 225.

of Hamburge in Germanie. And what charges you or any that you employ shall be at, wee shall thankfully repay.

'S^t, if it please you to consult Sir Thomas Witherington therein it will not bee amisse, for wee beleewe the Deputie and rest of our bretheren at Yorke have desired his favour and Assistance as being a matter of moment to this poore Country! though there be noe visible enemies to annoy us, yet pickaroones and lurking knaves there may be in the way to come from farr! for roovers at Sea are seldome or never out of their way! they

will goe any way for a rich Bootie. 'S^t, wee know you see much to be our good friend, and a zealott for the wellfair of your Country, as that wee shall not trouble ourselves to lay downe any motives before you to incite you to the worke, onely this

namely the fear of the London traders, who, as already quoted, seemed like great whales to the northern minnows. For that reason alone, if no other, Baynes was intreated to be sure to secure a convoy, so as to enable the Yorkshiremen to reach the foreign market promptly and in safety. Baynes had also to extract another favour from the Commonwealth authorities. In these times of national danger the ordinary sailor was at any moment liable to be pressed into the service of the navy. Therefore, having gained his point in the request for a convoy, Baynes at once asked for a licence for the sailors on the two cloth-laden ships 'y^t [they] may be freed from being prest, for if they loose the Markett at Hamburgh the 10th of the next month, the Dutch will reape the benefitt of it, and the pore people of the Northe loose halfe a yeares imployment, this cloth being the fruits of halfe a yeares labour'.¹

Twice a year at least the Yorkshire merchants carried their cloths to Hamburg or to the Baltic, and on every such occasion they sought the protection of the State. In the later years of the Commonwealth and during the wars of the subsequent reign they often failed to gain the desired provision. Occasionally the convoy was promised but did not come,² and often when it came it was hopelessly inadequate, and could offer no satisfactory guarantee of security to the merchant ships. Thus in 1666 there was a fleet of fifty sail at Hull, 'very riche ladened

Letter to Lambert, March 29, 1655 (*D. S. P., Interr.*, xcvi. 84).

D. S. P., Interr., cxxx. 40 and 44, September 1656; convoy promised

did not come.

with lead, corne, butter, and clothe, with other goods, vallew'd at 100,000^l and above'. This great mercantile flotilla was provided with one man-of-war to guard it on the high seas. The solitary ship had been convoying a fleet of eighty coal ships along the coast, and had 'met with fower great [Dutch] men of warr about 40 guns apeese', with very disastrous consequences to the colliers. The four Dutch vessels now hung about the entrance to the Humber, waiting for more merchant fleets to plunder, and hence the fifty laden ships dare not stir out of the estuary, although it was now November, and the time for sailing to the Continental markets had almost passed by for that season. No wonder that 'the people in those parts murmur crouelly that these coasts are noe better garded, and say they pay all there great sesments to small porpose, and thatt in Olliver's time there was better care taken to secure the coast trade than is now'.¹

It was amidst such difficulties as these that the Yorkshire merchants sought to develop their foreign trade, and to expand the market for northern cloths. Bound by the restrictions of the companies, open to the opposition of neighbouring or distant ports, and devoid of continuous security on the waters, foreign trade was far from being an easy road to opulence. That these were not the only obstacles will become evident in the next chapter. In this chapter we have attempted to describe the general organization of foreign commerce, the nature of the societies which did the pioneer work in the Continental markets, and the constant state of insecurity which prevailed on the North Sea during centuries of warfare, undeveloped international law, and rival commercial empires.

CHAPTER VI

SOME MILESTONES IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THE textile history of Yorkshire during the seventeenth century is full of complications and vicissitudes. The first sixty years are marked by a series of events of a more or less catastrophic nature, under the influence of which economic progress became very difficult, if not altogether impossible. There were distractions at home, where plague and civil strife were demanding their heavy toll. State attempts to regulate the industry had disastrous effects upon its prosperity, and the efforts which were made to push the sale of English cloth abroad were met by the opposition of foreign governments, who were desirous of establishing economic independence and of fostering their own national industries. Forces, economic and political, were acting and interacting in blind and often purposeless conflict. National and local interests clashed in bitter rivalry; economic thought was laboriously pushing through to the light; the laws of economic action were dim and vague, and those who set them forth generally did so with interested motives. Under such circumstances the textile industry pursued a chequered career, and it was not until the later decades of the century that it really set out on that course of prosperity which preceded the Industrial Revolution. In this chapter we shall consider those events which were most potent in their influence on the welfare of the Yorkshire industry.

The first great event of the century, so far as Yorkshiremen were concerned, was the famous trial of 1612-14, one of at least three in which the interests of the Yorkshire clothiers were at stake. The trial was a test of strength between the clothiers and the ulnager officials, so it will be necessary to state in a few words the exact position of the ulnager at this period.

By the end of the sixteenth century the ulnager had been largely displaced by the local searchers, and his work was now entirely financial. All cloths had to bear the ulnager's seal

before they could be sold. The clothier paid subsidy and ulnage, obtained his seals, and was then allowed to expose his cloths for sale. Should he attempt to evade his obligations to the ulnager he was liable to heavy penalties, including forfeiture of his cloth. But provided that the seals were obtained and the fee paid the ulnager or his representative did not trouble about the dimensions or quality of the cloth. These aspects of regulation he left to the searchers, who were appointed by the justices of the peace in accordance with the legislation outlined in a previous chapter.¹

The ulnage of the county was farmed out by the Crown, and during the sixteenth century the farm of the 'ulnage of saleable woollen cloths in the city and county of York and the town of Kingston-on-Hull' changed hands frequently. In the reigns of Edward VI and Mary it was held by the Wentworths² and the Waterhouses, who paid about £96 a year as rent to the Crown. Later it passed to Sir Walter Raleigh, and in the reign of James I it became the property of the Duke of Lennox,³ who had by that time absorbed the ulnage of the whole kingdom. Occasionally the tenant-in-chief sublet a part of his holding to others, as in the case of Lennox, who re-farmed the Yorkshire ulnage to Sir Thomas Vavasour, Sir John Wattes, and Sir John Middleton. These men employed two deputy ulnagers, George Nixon and Thomas Snyder, who carried on the actual administration and collection of the ulnage fees, appointing assistants where necessary to help in the distribution of seals and the collection of the ulnage dues. It was the business of these officials to live in the heart of the clothing districts, and to go to the houses of the clothiers, when sent for, to seal the cloths and to receive the necessary fees.

What were the dues on each cloth? What ought they to be? These were questions around which centred several agitations

¹ The ulnager's men and the searchers were not always in perfect harmony. Thus in 1618 the deputy-ulnagers of Leeds declared that the 'Comon Searchers appointed . . . for searching of cloths do usually set their search seal to cloths that are not truly contented . . . and that the said searchers who are by their office and oath to search truly the cloths within their charge are clothiers themselves, and do usually make faulty cloths themselves as other clothiers do.' Copy of Memorandum transcript kindly lent by Mr. J. Lister.

² *Calendar of State Papers*, vol. xxi, pt. ii, 770, f. 77 (1547).

³ *D. S. P., Chas. II.*, xvi, 87.

lawsuits during the Stuart period. In these controversies old and long-established custom were at variance, and usually custom gained the victory. To go fully into the details of the cases would lead us into a maze of legal and technical data of little real interest; but the broad features of the dispute are easy to understand. The amount of subsidy on a whole cloth of assize was 4*d.*, and the ulnage $\frac{1}{2}$ *d.* When the smaller Yorkshire cloths first came within the scope of these charges in 1393 each kersey was reckoned as a quarter of a whole cloth, and so paid subsidy of 1*d.*, whilst on every four kerseys $\frac{1}{2}$ *d.* was paid as ulnage. Eventually the $\frac{1}{2}$ *d.* fee seems to have been dropped, and in the sixteenth century 1*d.* per kersey was the only payment made by the clothiers. In the meantime, however, the variety of Yorkshire cloths was increasing rapidly. The 'Northern Dozen' still remained about 12-13 yards in length, but kerseys had been increased considerably in size, and might be of any length up to 18 yards. Still, although they approximated now to a third, or possibly one-half, the dimensions of a whole cloth of assize, they only paid 1*d.* as subsidy. Other varieties of cloth had also been increased in length, but were paying small fees, especially the long cloths (32 yards), which should have been contributing about 4*d.*, but were still paying 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ *d.* These customary payments were evidently accepted by the collectors, who were content to confine themselves merely to giving out seals and receiving pence, without taking any measurements, for a witness in 1596 declared that he had never known any cloths measured which have been bought and sold within the county of York, by the ulnager or collector of the subsidy, nor by any others by their appointment'. It was the custom alone which had kept the subsidy on kerseys down to 1*d.*, and a great opportunity therefore presented itself to any staunch upholder of the law who might care to demand payment proportionate to the size of the cloth.

There was a slight preliminary skirmish in 1596,¹ when a collector of these dues attempted to compel two Birstall men to pay more than 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ *d.* per piece for certain long cloths which they had made. But the real struggle did not take place until the following reign, when 'a penny a kersey' was the battle-cry.

¹ Exchequer depositions, 38-9 Eliz., Mich., no. 23, York and Hull.

At this time Sir Thomas Vavasour, Sir John Wattes, and Sir John Middleton had taken the Yorkshire ulnage in farm from the Duke of Lennox, and had as their deputies George Nixon of London, and Thomas Snyderall of Halifax. The aim of these men was to increase the levy on kerseys from 1*d.* to 1½*d.* They declared that the statute of 1393-4 decreed that subsidy should be paid in proportion to the dimensions of the cloth, and that since three Yorkshire kerseys now equalled one whole cloth of assize, the payment should be 4½*d.* for the three (i. e. the amount of subsidy and ulnage for a whole cloth), or in other words 1½*d.* each. In further justification of this demand, the deputies pointed out that the Customs authorities now regarded three kerseys as equal to one whole cloth when levying Customs charges. Therefore let the kersey pay its just and proper tribute, instead of stealing into the market under false pretences. But the ulnage collectors recognized that it would be an unwise policy to attempt to levy the extra ½*d.* all at once, and therefore decided to proceed as gently as possible. In May 1611 the collectors began to demand 1½*d.* per kersey, and by means of arguments and threats succeeded in obtaining the additional ½*d.* from some clothiers. St. Bartholomew's Fair was drawing near, and large numbers of clothiers were preparing their consignments of cloth to send to that great meeting ground. But no cloth could go unsealed, and as the deputies refused to seal any cloths unless the clothiers paid the increased subsidy, many submitted and gave the sum demanded.¹ Whereupon, deeming the time to be ripe for a further advance, Nixon and Snyderall began to demand 1½*d.* per cloth. This was in November 1611. The makers of kerseys were in arms at once, in opposition to the new demands. They applied as usual for their seals, and tendered 1*d.* for each cloth, only to be refused by the deputies. Many therefore dispatched their cloths unsealed, either to the Yorkshire ports or to London, and the deputies retorted by seizing all the unsealed cloths upon which they could lay hands. Some men had their pieces captured in their own districts, and had to pay a heavy ransom, in addition to the 1½*d.*, in order to get them back. One man, Thomas Davye, of Midgeley in the parish of Halifax, had 'Tenn of his owne carseyes . . . seized

¹ D. S. P., Jas. I, lxx. 78, August 18, 1611

and taken at Hull by a pursuivant, and by one Nixon'. He asked for seals before dispatching his pieces, but Snyderall deputy had refused to give them out for less than 1½d. and so, fearful lest he should lose the continental market, he had dispatched the goods unsealed, only to have them detained at the port. The packs of cloth which were being forwarded to Blackwell Hall or St. Bartholomew's Fair shared a similar fate, and a number of clothiers were arrested for the resistance which they had offered to the ulnager's men. Finally, adding insult to injury, the deputies threatened 'that if the clothiers of the Vicarage of Halifax would not agree with the ulnager the payment would be enhanced to 2d.'

The demand for an increase of 50 per cent. in the amount of subsidy and ulnage was accompanied by other acts of aggression on the part of the ulnage officials. The clothiers were now subjected to new inconveniences, against which they had no power of redress, since the deputy could always punish them by refusing to issue seals and by seizing the pieces. The chief annoyance was the discontinuance of the practice which had formerly allowed the clothiers to procure their seals quickly and cheaply. This grievance was well expressed by one of the witnesses in the subsequent lawsuit. 'The farmers [of the ulnage] have used to keepe severall deputyes or sealers in severall towneshippes or hamblettes of the Parishe of Hallifaxe, to be readie to seale the carseyes there made with more speed and conveneance, and they have also used to come to men's houses for the same purpose.' This practice, however, had been discontinued about 1610 by the deputy Snyderall, and now the clothiers were compelled to go 'fetch their seales, some a myle, some two myles, some three, some fowre, some seven myles from their dwellinge houses, since the sealers gave over to come to the said clothiers' houses to seal their cloth'. Many clothiers had sent for Snyderall to come to their loom-shops and seal their pieces, but he had refused, and the clothiers were therefore compelled not only to pay the extra subsidy, but also to go to Snyderall's establishment. The deputies had further begun to insist upon the measuring of the cloths, even although the pieces had been previously 'searched' by the local searchers. Since the cloths were generally dried and tentered after the

'search', and would have to be wetted again if the deputy wished to measure them, the clothier was now faced with the possibility of a double 'making up' of his pieces.

These attacks on long-established customs roused the opposition of the clothiers in the kersey-making districts, and although many eventually submitted to the new exactions, a few of the braver spirits put forward a sturdy resistance. Chief amongst these was Robert Lawe, one of the more wealthy clothiers, who had contrived to dispose of 290 unsealed cloths, and was in consequence overwhelmed with threats of imprisonment and other penalties. Along with him were others equally obstinate in their attitude towards the ulnage officials, and at last, in 1612, the Attorney-General, at the request of Nixon, the deputy ulnager, instituted proceedings against 'Robert Lawe, Richard Lawe, John Drake, and Michael Godley, clothiers that do trade and sell Northern Kersies'. In his Bill of Complaint, the Attorney-General quoted the complicated series of Acts relating to the dimensions of kerseys, and argued that as three kerseys equalled one broad cloth they ought to pay $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ each, or $4\frac{1}{2}d.$ for three.

'Yet so it is that Robert Lawe, Richard Lawe, John Drake, and Michael Godley, being clothiers or persons that do trade and sell Yorkshire kersies in great quantities, do refuse to answer and pay to his Majesty's ulnager . . . or his deputy $4d.$ for subsidy and $\frac{1}{2}d.$ for ulnage for three of the saleable Yorkshire kersies . . . and by their examples divers of the clothiers and sheeremen of the County do also refuse to answer and pay such subsidy and ulnage for three of the Yorkshire saleable kersies, and do daily put their saleable kersies for sale without paying the said subsidy and ulnage, to the great loss and diminishing of the King's profit and revenue, which should and ought to grow to his Majesty by the wools and cloths of the said County of York, and to the manifest contempt and breach of his Majesty's laws and statutes in that behalf provided.'¹

The defendants replied with the plea that they were only upholding a traditional and long-accepted custom. Their defence ran as follows:

That all have used, time out of mind, in the parishes of Bradford, Halifax, and Keighley, ever sithence subsidy and ulnage was payable on Northern Kersies, to pay for subsidy

¹ Bills and Answers, Exchequer, Jas. I, York, no. 1296, 10 Jas. I, Mich.

of ulnage 1*d.* and no more, until within two years last past or thereabouts. About two years ago the deputy ulnagers asked for five farthings, alledging that to be a proportionable rate, and by menaces and indirect means compelled some poor men to answer after that rate, and that sithence, they have lately demanded 1½*d.*

This the defendants had refused to pay, and they reiterated the fact that for two hundred years and more only 1*d.* had been paid, and was the proper proportionable rate; they 'have paid or tendered to be paid to the ulnager's deputy the accustomed duties of 1*d.* per kersey, and nevertheless have been much vexed and troubled, whereby the trade of clothing is in danger of decay'. Finally, they declared that this extra ½*d.* would mean the exaction of an additional £200 per annum from the parishioners concerned.

Not content with acting on the defensive, the clothiers instituted a counter-action against their accusers,¹ and Robert Lawe, with four other clothiers, brought in a suit against Vavasour, Wattes, Middleton, and their deputies Nixon and Syddall. The burden of this complaint was that the deputies had exacted and extorted more than they ought to claim, had seized the wares of those who resisted their extortions, and had been negligent in their duties by not coming to the clothiers' houses when sent for to seal the cloths. The plaintiffs took this opportunity of blowing their own trumpet very lustily, and their Bill of Complaint therefore contains some admirable purple patches of self-praise. The clothiers declared that 20,000 men, women, and children were employed in 'the trade of clothing' in the four parishes of Halifax, Bradford, Bingley, and Keighley; they stated that in the Halifax parish alone poor relief amounting to £40 per month was administered to 600 impotent, aged, and poor people, and they pointed out that the inhabitants of the parish of Halifax 'out of zeal to God's holy religion, do freely and voluntarily, at their own Charges, maintain and give wages to ten preachers, over and above the payment of all tithes and oblations, . . . and by the special grace of God there is not one Popish recusant inhabiting in the said great and

The plaintiffs in this counter-suit were Robert Lawe, John Dixon, John Parkinson, John Oldfield, and Richard Smith; they were not the same as the defendants in the first case.

populous parish of Halifax, . . . all of which benefits do arise and growe from the said trade of making . . . Northern Kersies¹.

The cases having been instituted, long series of elaborate interrogatories were drawn up covering all the points at issue, and witnesses were called to give evidence on these questions.¹ The hearing of the trial was conducted by commissioners, who sat at Leeds in September 1613 to receive evidence. The plea of the clothiers was one of custom, and they therefore called the oldest men available, in order to have testimony which would go as far back as possible. Venerable clothiers, 75, 78, and 80 years of age, gave evidence based on a life-long experience of the industry, and although there were differences on minor points, there was perfect unanimity on the central question as to the amount of subsidy and ulnage on the kerseys. Witnesses declared that from time 'when the memory of man is not to the contrary' the makers of Northern kerseys had only paid 1*d.* They refuted the statement that three kerseys were regarded by the Customs officials as equal to one whole broad cloth of assize by pointing out that the three kerseys paid only 5*s.* 4*d.* at Hull, whilst the broad cloths paid 6*s.* 8*d.* each; and they reminded their opponents that considerations of quality must be taken into account, as well as mere dimensions and weight. The evidence was overwhelmingly in favour of the clothiers, and the decision of the Court showed this.

'Upon the hearing, it appeared to this Court that it hath been heretofore used and accustomed of very long and ancient time without any interruption, until now of late, . . . that the clothiers inhabiting within the parishes of Halifax, Bradford, Bingley, and Keighley have only paid the sum or rate of 1*d.* for the subsidy and ulnage of every Kersey, and no more. And that the same hath been during all the said time accepted as the proper and one sum payable for the subsidy and ulnage of a Kersey as this Court now conceiveth, and therefore, without great and just cause to be shown to the contrary, the Court thought it not fit to be altered. Therefore, it is thought fit and ordered by this Court that the said clothiers . . . shall from henceforth continue the payment of one penny only, . . . without demand or exaction of any further sum.'

The clothiers had gained an absolute victory, and for twenty-four years they remained in undisputed possession of the fruits

¹ Exchequer Depositions, 11 Jas. I, Mich., nos. 9 and 11, at Leeds.

of that victory. But almost immediately they were faced with a new situation, which brought far greater misfortune upon the industry than that which the ulnager's extortions could have inflicted. From 1614 onwards there are constantly recurring complaints of bad trade, and of the decay of industry and commerce, and although these dolorous jeremiads were often uttered by persons who had interests to advance, still there can be little doubt that the next half-century was marked by frequent and surprisingly periodical fluctuations, with serious depressions in industrial and commercial life. As to the causes of these fluctuations the seventeenth century writers could not agree, but one important reason seems to be that our foreign trade in cloth was now of great importance, and that it was being called upon to encounter many powerful influences and tendencies, which might bring temporary or more permanent depression. These deterrents might come from some government action or conditions at home, or from the economic and political movement of some foreign power with whose subjects England carried on trade. The textile trade was therefore subjected to many strong blasts of adversity during the next few decades, and those engaged in the manufacture of cloths were often plunged into depression and unemployment.

The first heavy blow came from the Cockayne experiment in dyeing English cloths at home. In the sixteenth century it had been thought desirable that fabrics should be dyed and finished at home, instead of providing employment for the people of other lands, as was the case when English cloth was exported undyed and unfinished. The Reformation Parliament of Henry VIII therefore found time, in the midst of its manifold labours, to declare that henceforth no piece above a certain value should be exported until it had been properly dressed and finished.¹ This Act, however, was rendered inoperative time and time again, by granting licences allowing merchants to export cloths contrary to the statute.² The Merchant Adventurers exported large quantities of cloths of good quality in an unfinished condition, and were said to provide employment for 50,000 persons in the Low Countries, finishing the raw cloths

¹ Statute 27 Hen. VIII, c. 13.

² *Calendar of State Papers*, vols. xv-xx, frequently.

exported from England. In fact, the whole area served by the Adventurers took scarcely any but white cloths from England, and the English merchants seem to have made few efforts to push the sale of coloured wares. Restrictions, and eventually prohibitions, were raised against such a trade; the governments of these parts attempted to ban any import of finished cloths, and in April 1612 the Archduke Albert of Austria declared that 'after the last contract made [with a certain merchant] shalbe expired, he will give out no more passports for English cloths to come into the Countie of fflaunders, but that there shall onelie come in white clothes to Antwerpe by that ri^{ve} there to be dyed and drest as in tymes past'. The English representative in Flanders fumed against the decree, but without avail, and the volume of coloured cloth exported to Flanders shrank to nothing.¹

This prohibition gave a stimulus to many ideas which were already in the air in England. Why not foster a national industry, by compelling all cloths to be dyed and finished at home? Why not retaliate on Flanders by forbidding the export of white cloths, which alone Flanders would admit? Why not tap another source of revenue, by granting to some person or company the monopoly of this finishing industry? And lastly, why not take this opportunity of breaking down the power of the Merchant Adventurers, who were already becoming the object of considerable hatred? In this manner the national industry, the national honour, and the royal purse could all be benefited at the same time, a tempting combination of advantages. In July 1614, therefore, James issued a proclamation forbidding the exportation of unfinished cloth, and by so doing practically deprived the Adventurers of their occupation.² In the following February a new company was set up, with Sir William Cockayne at its head, and this company was to deal with the cloth which before this time the Merchant Adventurers had exported. Cockayne had a new patent method of dyeing and finishing the pieces, and his company undertook to dye the cloths and to export an increasing quantity of finished

¹ Cotton MSS., Galba E. 1. 399. Letter dated Brussels, April 13, 1612.

² Cunningham, *op. cit.*, ii. 294. For a detailed study of the whole episode see Durham, 'Relations of the Crown to Trade under James I', in *Trans. of the Royal Hist. Soc.*, New Series, xiii. 208-18.

Is each year, thus developing a branch of industry which the policy of the old company had certainly allowed to be neglected. In return for the favours granted, the new company was to pay a handsome fee to the Exchequer. It then entered its fair domain, to buy the white cloths from the country clothiers, dye and finish them, and find a foreign market for them. From the first the venture was a dismal failure in every respect, and entirely dislocated the cloth trade. The provincial weavers, who had formerly prepared stocks of cloth for the Merchant Adventurers, made similar supplies for their successors, but as the new company had no market it could not take these cloths out of the hands of the country clothiers. Further, the old company, though not defunct, was barred from any export of unfinished cloths, and could therefore do nothing to relieve the situation. Hence clothiers were thrown into great distress, and Sir John Savill, in the House of Commons, declared that in Leeds, Halifax, and Wakefield the clothiers were being ruined, and at least 13,000 persons affected by this *impasse*.¹ The export of cloth declined considerably. From December 1613 to March 1614 (a period of three months), the export from the port of London amounted to 37,494 whole cloths. During the same three months of the following year, when the scheme was in full operation, the export fell to 29,283, a decrease of 17,211.² The new company failed entirely to secure a footing in foreign markets. Hence, in May 1615, three and a half months after the company had been established, a writer declared³ that

The great project of dieing and dressinge of cloth is at a stand, and they knowe not well how to go forward nor backward, for the clothiers do generally complain that theyre clothe is on theyre hands, and the clotheworkers and diers wearie Kinge and counsaile with petitions, wherein they complaine that they are in worse case than before, . . . and indeed yt is found that there hath not been a cloth died or dressed since Christmass more than usual, . . . whereby the Customes do fall, and many other inconveniences follow both at home and abroade, besides the new companions differ amongst themselves and drawe severall wayes, so that the old companie hath been dealt withall to resume the trade, and set al straight again, yf yt may be.'

Quoted by Miss Hewart, in *Economic Journal* (1900), p. 28. No original reference is given.

² *D. S. P., Jas. I, lxxx. 58-9*

Letter from Chamberlain to Carleton, May 25, 1615 (*D. S. P., lxxx. 108*).

The industry was indeed almost at a standstill, especially amongst the white cloth manufacturers. Clothiers complained of the supplies of cloth which were left on their hands, and the Government ordered the old company to relieve the makers by taking the supplies which had been prepared. The new company pleaded for permission to export white as well as coloured pieces, thus admitting its failure to establish itself as a cloth-finishing concern. Eventually,¹ in 1617, the scheme was abandoned, and the old company of Merchant Adventurers reinstated with greater powers than before, in order to win back the trade which had been lost during those unfortunate years of experiment.²

The Cockayne venture was intended to foster one branch of the textile industry. It failed dismally, and was partially responsible for the plunging of the whole industry into many years of depression. For the period which followed was one of economic dejection, especially acute in 1621-3. This depression affected every part of the country, and complaints came from all clothing counties, from Devon to Yorkshire, from Kent to Anglesey.³ Industry was at a standstill, and foreign trade was reduced by more than half. The Merchant Adventurers declared that their trade had fallen in value from £200,000 to £70,000, and a contemporary writer stated that the export of cloth had diminished by two-thirds.⁴ There seemed to be no vent for cloth, and in March 1622 over 5,000 Yorkshire pieces lay unsold in the 'Northern Hall' at Blackwell Hall; the Manchester Hall had 850 'fries, Cottons, and Bayes' unsold, 'besides that there is far greater quanteties of clothe of these sortes lyinge in the Cuntrye, redie to bee sent upp if the market wear not soe loded'.⁵ Clothiers did their utmost to keep their workpeople employed, but in vain, even though in some parts the justices of the peace ordered them not to dismiss any hands.⁶ Through-

¹ *D. S. P.*, *Jas. I*, xciii. 23, August 12, 1617. Also Smith's *Memoirs of Wool*, vol. i, p. 145.

² See *D. S. P.*, *Jas. I*, lxxx. 110-12; also S. R. Gardiner's *History of England*, II, 385-90.

³ See *D. S. P.* for these years, *passim*; especially *Jas. I*, cxxvii. 76.

⁴ *D. S. P.*, *Jas. I*, cxv. 100, and Stowe MSS., 354, ff. 63-5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, cxxvii. 73-7.

⁶ As in Gloucester and Suffolk, *D. S. P.*, *Jas. I*, cxxviii. 49. See E. M. Leonard, *English Poor Relief*, p. 148.

in the clothing counties money was scarce, bankruptcies were common, unemployment was rife. In Yorkshire the effect was keenly felt, for that county supplied large quantities of white cloths for exportation, and the shrinkage in the foreign demand brought great suffering on the clothing population. In addition to this, the scarcity of corn was 'greater than ever known in the memory of man',¹ and one complaint from Yorkshire, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, and the other clothing counties declared that 'the poore have assembled in troops of forty and fifty, and gone to the houses of the rich and demanded meat and money, which has been given them through fear'. In places the provision markets were raided.² The mercantile centres were equally dislocated by the depression. The Corporation of Hull spoke of 'the sudden and great decay of this Towne, happenynge as well by the generall decay of Trade as also by the late losse of many of our shippes and men at sea, as by the present pynching dearth with us'.³ Similarly the authorities of York lamented 'the decayinge estate of this Citie for want of commerce and tradeinge, the Artificers therein haveinge much Adu to get bread to susteyne them and their families, in this tyme of scarcety of corne and money, the like wherof hath not fallen out in the memory of man'.⁴ The problem was indeed acute, and all classes were affected. As the clothiers of fourteen counties declared, 'these tymes do more than thretten to throw us and every one of us, yea, many thousands of poore and others yt depend upon us, into ye bottomles pitt of remedies destruction'.⁵ Similar depressions occurred in 1630-1, when the ravages of plague helped to bring the fortunes of Yorkshire to a very low ebb; and again in 1638, 1649-50, and in the last years of the Commonwealth, when letters from Lord Fairfax and other leading men in Yorkshire referred to 'the particuler Decay and Ruine of the Cloathing Trade of this County'.

These periodical depressions of trade, coming at intervals of eight to ten years, attracted a great amount of attention from individual writers and from the Government. Explanations

¹ *D. S. P.*, *Jas. I*, cxxxi. 78.

² *Ibid.*, cxxvii. 102.

Printed in Cartwright's *Chapters in the History of Yorkshire*, p. 275.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

⁴ *Stowe MSS.*, 334. I. 63.

of their causes, and suggestions as to infallible remedies, were never lacking. In 1622 the Privy Council decided to appoint a commission,¹ consisting of a 'convenient Number of Persons of Qualitie, Understanding, Experience and Judgement', to whose 'Judgement, Industrie and Care [it] might commit the further searching out and better discerning of the true Causes of the Decaie of Trade, and the finding out of fit and convenient Remedies to be applied to the same'. The Commission was to receive evidence from all parts of the country, and for that purpose the justices of the peace in each county were to call the clothiers before them, in order to select two representatives who should be able to place before the Commissioners the grievances of the county from which they came.² Armed with a number of points of reference, the Commissioners set to work, and after 'many conferences had with the Marchaunts Adventurers and the marchaunts of other Societies and Companies, with the gentry of quality of severall Counties, with the Cloathiers of the severall cloathynge sheires, with the officers of his Majties Customes and the drapers and diers of London, and after manie dayes spent in this waightie service', presented a long report of the 'true Groundes and Motives of the greate decaye of the sale and vente of our English Cloth in fforaigne partes'.³

The causes enumerated in this report apply to some extent to all the depressions of the seventeenth century, and illustrate the difficulties with which the progress of the cloth trade was confronted. They were:

1. 'The makinge of cloth . . . in fforeigne partes in more aboundance than in former times, being theareunto chiefly enabled by the woolles and other materialls transported from the Kingdomes of England, Scotland, and Ireland, wee conceive to be the cheifest cause that lesse quantitie of ours are vented there.'

2. 'The false and deceitfull makinge, dyinge, and dressinge of our clothe . . . and stufes, which disgraceth it in fforaigne partes.'

3. 'The hevvy burthen uppon our cloth, wheareby it is made soe deare to the buyer that those that were wont to furnish

¹ Brit. Mus., 190 (g). 13 (317), quoted in Cunningham, *Growth*, Appendix E; Rymer, *Foedera*, xvii. 410.

² See *D. S. P., Jas. I.* cxxix. 81, for report from Bishop of Chester and justices of Lancashire concerning the election of representatives.

³ Stowe MSS., 554, f. 45.

themselves therewith in florraigne parts either by [buy] Cloth
in other countries, or cloath themselves in a cheaper manner.'

Another document explains that the dues inflicted by the English Government, by the companies monopolizing the export trade, and by the foreign powers through or into whose countries the cloths went were so heavy that they made

'ye charg of our English clothe from ye hands of ye maker to ye back of ye werer exceede ye charg of a duche [Dutch] clothe made and worne in Hollande by iij^{li}. and xij^s., and in ye Archduke country by v^{li}. xij^s.'¹

4. 'The present state of the times by reason of the warres in Germany is conceived by many to be some present impediment to the vent of our cloth, partly by the interuption of passages, partly for want of mony.'

5. 'The pollices of the Marchaunts Adventereours, which bringe uppon themselves suspicion of combinacion in tradinge, and the smallnes of their number which doe now usually buy and vent cloth, and the like pollicies of other marchaunts who are not able or willinge to extend themselves in this time of extremitie to take off the cloth from the handes of the clotheirs.'

6. 'The scarcety of coyne at home and the basenes of florraigne coynes compared unto ours.' For the scarcity the East India Company was especially blamed.

7. 'The want of meanes of retorne for our marchauntes, especially out of the Eastland Countries, which discourage them to carry out cloth thether, because they can neither sell for redy money nor barter for vendable comodities.'

Another paper complains of the trade of the Dutch, who were said to bring French, Eastland, and Russian commodities, and who 'fill the Marketts here and carry no clothe or Englishe ware [back], but only redy monnys'.²

8. 'The too little use of waringe cloth at home, and the too much use of silkes and florraigne stufes, which overbalance our trade.'³

The first reason offered by the Commission was very true. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many of the countries of Western Europe were building up industrial systems, and attempting to meet their own demands for cloth. First the Low Countries tried to regain some of their former

Stowe MSS., 354, f. 65. Report and petition of clothiers of Yorkshire and thirteen other counties, presented to the Privy Council.

ibid., f. 65.

² Ibid., 554, f. 45; also *D. S. P., Jan. I, cxxxii*, 55.

fame as clothmakers,¹ and then at a later date the policy of Colbert succeeded in establishing in France a strong textile industry. The Dutch Government levied heavy import duties on English cloths passing into the country, severely punished any importation of false wares, and in 1612 forbade the entry of any but white cloths. The Cockayne bungle resulted in a tariff war, and enabled the Dutch to make progress as cloth-makers. The Dutch Government gave a bounty to all who set up looms,² and many Englishmen, weavers of broad cloths and serges as well as woolcombers, were soon to be found in Holland.³ The Dutch contrived to get supplies of English wool and English fuller's earth, and therefore manufactured bays, serges, and other cloths, which were sold on the Continent cheaper than the English wares, thanks to the various imposts under which the English pieces laboured.⁴ The exportation of wool to foreign parts was a perennial theme of complaint, and though the English Government had forbidden its exportation to Holland, the wool was smuggled there from Newcastle,⁵ Scotland, and Ireland, to the great disgust of English clothiers.⁶ Thus, assisted by English labour, receiving supplies of raw material from England, and aided by strong protective duties, the Dutch were able to produce large quantities of cloth, which replaced the English pieces and so reduced the amount of our cloth sold in Holland. The troubles before and during the Civil War in England further assisted the progress of the Dutch, and a writer in 1649 speaks very emphatically concerning 'the greate number of clothe workers, weavers, dyers, cottoners, and pressers repayingr from England' to Holland, as well as to Hamburg, Altona, and other centres across the North Sea, where Englishmen were competing against their fellow workers in England.⁷

¹ As early as 1527 various towns in the Low Countries were refusing admission to English cloths (*Calendar of State Papers, Henry VIII*, vol. iv, p. 3433).

² Unwin, *Industrial Organization in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, p. 192.

³ Ibid.

⁴ *D. S. P., Chas. I*, ccxxiv. 44 (1632).

⁵ *D. S. P., Jas. I*, lxxxviii. 76 (1616).

⁶ Add. MSS., 34324, f. 203 (1622).

⁷ *D. S. P., Interr.*, i. 34 (1649). Another writer (*D. S. P., Interr.*, ix. 5, (1650)) declares that 'great quantities of white and coloured cloths which are made here (i.e. in Hamburg) and being endraped of Spanish and other sorts of wool, are offered at cheaper rates than we English can do ours, and are

Similar industrial developments had taken place in France, though there was scarcely any immigration of English cloth-makers into that country. As early as 1622 it was declared that 'the French and Dutch now made so much cloth 'that they have noe needs of our English drapery'.¹ Large quantities of wool and fuller's earth were carried thither in spite of all prohibitions, and the French trade flourished, nourished partly by English raw material. Even Poland turned against English cloth, and the Eastland merchants were hit hard by the growth of manufactures

not only in Holland but also in Germany . . . and Brandenburg, and Silesia, and divers places in Poland and . . . Prussia, and the cloth can be afforded cheaper than any such like that can be carried out of England. . . . And whereas the gentlemen in England formerly used to cloath their attendants with English cloth, they, being now impoverished by reason of the late wars, do now cloath them with Silesia and such as is made in their own Country, not being able as formerly to go to the price of English cloth.'²

In refusing admission to English fabrics, foreign Governments generally stated that they were only protecting themselves against the false and deceitful wares made in England. The legislation of Elizabeth and James I was more effective than previous attempts had been in preventing fraudulent making of cloth, and the pieces exported were open to the usual complaints of uneven weaving, excessive stretching, and deceitful finishing. In about 1604³ the Dutch placed an embargo on faulty English cloths, and thirty years later a writer from Delft declared that 'the Dutch merchants avoid the buying of [English] cloths, finding them now worse made and yet as faulty as before, whereby our English cloth grows more and more in disgrace, and causeth the Dutch to go on with more courage in the making of cloth'. In 1635 the London merchants trading with France commented that 'the ffrenche, (who are very prone upon the

by long continuance of the clothing trade they make them very good and substantial, whereas ours are made thin and faulty . . . (therefore) they sell us, thanks to this and the impositions which the States have put on cloths, i.e. 12s. on all white cloths of £16 and under, 40s. on all £16-24, 13s. 4d. on all above £24, . . . from which impositions their own cloths suffer'.

¹ Add. MSS. 34324, f. 203.

² Add. MSS., i. 465 (1632).

³ Cotton MSS., Galba E, i. 284-6.

least occasion to interrupt the trade of the English and to villifie their manufactures) . . . doe daylie complayne of the badness of the English draperie', especially of the Welsh and northern cottons and other coarse northern cloths which found their chief markets in France, but which were now being made so 'vicious' that the French had begun to return them to the exporters, 'desiring a reformation'.¹ Two years later the Government of Poland issued an edict prohibiting the vent of strained cloths, and went a step further by permitting only those pieces to be imported which were of sizes different from those fixed by the English cloth statutes.² In 1652 the Senate of Hamburg sent a representative to the English Government to complain of the 'abuses w^{ch} are in the makeing of the English cloaths'.³ The reputation of English pieces abroad was apparently bad, and may have helped considerably to bring about these serious trade depressions.

The remedies recommended by the Commission of 1622 and later inquiries followed the main principles of the mercantilist theories, which were in almost general acceptance at that time. Forbid the exportation of wool and fuller's earth, and establish a coastal police to prevent smuggling; take precautions 'that no coyne be carryed out of the realme'; abolish some of the export dues, and curb the power of monopolistic organizations such as the Merchant Adventurers, so that these societies may not levy heavy tolls on non-members, or impede the expansion of trade. These were the usual suggestions advanced for the improvement of economic affairs. Then, having deprived our rivals of their supplies of raw material, reorganize and strengthen the machinery for ensuring a high quality of workmanship; simplify the cloth laws and administer them more thoroughly;⁴ then, 'all theis being duelic reformed there is great hope that clothing will flourish again, which hath mayntained more when clothing was goode and comodities cheape than all the trades in this kingdom besides'.⁵

These varied suggestions occupied the attention of Stuart

¹ *D. S. P., Chas. I.*, cccxiv, 93 (1635).

² Eastland Merchants' petition, *D. S. P., Chas. I.*, ccclxvi, 71.

³ Order Book, *Interr.*, i, 60, p. 511. Order of Council of State, April 6, 1652.

⁴ Report of Commission, 1622, Stowe MSS. 554, f. 45.

⁵ Add. MSS. 34,324, f. 213.

ers from time to time, and we shall have cause in the next chapter to observe how some of the recommendations were carried out. For the present, however, we must continue our survey of some of the chief events which influenced the Yorkshire cloth industry up to the Restoration. Gradually the stagnation of 1622 gave place to greater briskness in our home and foreign trade, and for some years the cloth industry enjoyed a period of comparative prosperity. But in 1630 the cries of decay of trade were renewed, and cloth-makers once more plunged into depression, though happily not so keen as that of eight years before.¹ These years, 1630-1, were memorable, however, because of the terrible plague which swept over Yorkshire, and which helped to bring the cloth industry to a standstill. We are apt to underrate the frequency and the fierceness of the epidemics which periodically ravaged some part of Europe. We are well acquainted with the horrors of the Black Death, the Great Plague of London, and the outbreak of cholera in the early thirties of last century. But really these were only the most important in a long series of plagues which visited this country. There was a serious outbreak in Yorkshire in 1596-7. The death-roll was heavy in Leeds, rising from an average of 102 for 1590-5 to 271 in 1596, and to 311 in the following year.² This pestilence passed northward and claimed heavy toll at Richmond, Knaresborough, and other northern towns. In 1610 there was another outbreak, the death-roll at Leeds being increased by 50 per cent.; and so terrible was the mortality at Beverley that the register of St. Mary's Church speaks of two score victims 'yat was shuffled into graves without any reading over them'.³ Leeds suffered from further visitations in 1617⁴ and 1623, a famine in the latter year helping to swell the death-rate. The outbreak of 1631 was national in its scope, and even embraced most parts of Western Europe. London, Birmingham, Leicester, and Nottingham all suffered from 'the sickness', and so great was the distress in Cambridge that the mayor and the heads of the various colleges petitioned

¹ See D. S. P. for those years, *passim*.

² Figures of births, marriages, and deaths in Leeds: Thoresby MSS. Thoresby Soc. Library, Leeds).

³ Cook, *Hist. Notes on Beverley* (1880), p. 8.

⁴ Death Roll: 1615, 195; 1617, 520.

the King for leave to employ part of their moneys for the relief of the poor. The progress of this pestilence in the clothing district of Yorkshire is vividly depicted in a long letter written by Wentworth, who was at that time President of the Council of the North.¹

' True itt is (that leauing our neighbours of Lancashire and Lincolnshire miserably distressed with the pestilence, that now w^{thin} thes sixe weekes the infection is cum'd to ourselues in diuers partts of this county, and last of all into this City [York]. Upon the Edge of Lancashire ther is the toune of Heptonstall, w^{ch} hath neare forty howses infected. Mirfield, a little toune not farre of itt, hath lost ninescore persons, and both thes townes w^{thin} four miles of Halifax, w^{ch} yett, God be praysed, stands sownde, but much indangered, by reason of the great number of people and lardge trade of clothing there aboutes. It is likewise in the tow townes of Beeston and Holbecke w^{ch} are w^{thin} one mile of Leedes, and if it should please God to visit either of thos greate townes Halifax or Leedes, w^{ch} to allone trade more then all the cuntry besides, in good faith it would mightily distresse and impouerishe all that side of the cuntrye.'

In similar fashion other parts of the county had been attacked, and eventually York itself was stricken, in spite of the precautions taken by Wentworth.

Leeds escaped the pestilence of this year, but 1635 and 1637 were marked by abnormally high rates of mortality, whilst in 1640 and 1641² a similar outbreak seized upon the whole of the West Riding. Leeds, Bradford, and Halifax, all were swept by pestilence, and in January 1641 the justices of the peace in their Quarter Sessions at Wakefield declared 'that by occasion of the heauye visitation with w^{ch} itt hath pleased God to visitt the inhabitants of Dewesbury [several months before] the same contagion still continueinge in some particular places there, the trade and commerce of those inhabitants are soe much decayed and the poor soe exceedingly increased . . . that about two hundreth seaventie and odd persons . . . are to receive weekly allowance and relief'.³ The justices had already

¹ D.S.P. 171, L.C. 14.

² Thoresby MSS. Death roll for parich of Leeds: 1634, 496; 1635, 923; 1636, 479; 1637, 510; 1638, 398; 1639, 501.

³ Quarter Sessions Records, January 14, 1641, Wakefield; Order Book A 145 d.

arged the inhabitants within five miles of Dewsbury with one contribution for the relief of the sufferers, and they now ordered too to be raised throughout the Riding; but when the collectors attempted to obtain this money they met with sullen and stubborn refusals, for most other districts were in similar plight, and needed the money for their own suffering and poor.¹

Meanwhile the clothiers of the kersey-making area had been compelled to make another stand in defence of their ancient customs. After the legal decision of 1613 peace had reigned between the ulnager and the clothier, and during the subsequent years, in spite of plagues and depressions, some industrial progress had been registered. The number of clothiers had increased, especially in the Aire valley, and one witness in the 1638 lawsuit declared that 'in the towne of Shipley, and places adjoyning Keighley, Bingley, and Bradford] there are now about an hundred clothiers for one that was in these Townes' about sixty years before. Keighley had become famous for a certain kind of cloth known as Keighley kersseys or 'whites'; the parishes of Bradford, Bingley, and Shipley were said to contain 1,000 persons engaged in cloth-making, and the parish of Halifax alone claimed no less than 12,000 textile workers.

Further, a change had come over the nature of the wares which were being produced. In 1613 large numbers of 'broad-kerseys' were being made. These were cloths 14 to 17 yards long, and less than a yard in width, with a very broad list, or selvedge, which sometimes amounted to one-fifth or one-sixth of the whole cloth. These pieces were of inferior quality; they were often excessively tentured and deceitfully finished, and were therefore very cheap, selling at 1s. to 1s. 6d. per yard. These pieces had found a market in Holland, Germany, and France, being sold there by the Adventurers or the Eastland merchants, but between 1613 and 1638 there was a heavy fall in the demand for 'broad lists'. This was due partly to a rise in the price of wool, and to the heavy customs and other imposts, which in proportion to value weighed most heavily on the poorer cloths. At the same time the defective manufacture of these pieces brought them into bad repute abroad, and thus the witnesses declared in 1638 that 'very few have been vented

¹ Ibid., May 4, 1641, Pontefract; see also 184 d and 197.

[abroad] these late yeares, by reason of the basenes and ill-making thereof. This witness hath heard by the people in the Country of Silesia that by reason of the badness of the said kerseis which were then vented, they took upon them to make kerseis in those countries like in length and bredth¹ to the 'broad lists' formerly imported from the West Riding.¹ Further, the merchants were beginning to find that cloths of 'nientien and twentie yeards are more vendible and desired in forreigne partes than those of eightiene', and that they found a more ready and a more profitable sale for long pieces than for short cloths. Hence the very cheap cloth of short length, the broad list kersey, quickly disappeared. It succumbed because of its evil repute, because of the competition of the cheapest cloths made abroad, and because of the enterprise of merchants in pushing the sale of longer pieces of better quality. Some young merchants, giving evidence in 1638, had never dealt in 'broad lists', so quickly and completely had the demand for this cloth disappeared. In its place kerseys of all lengths up to 30 yards were being manufactured. The most popular pieces were from 18 to 23 yards, though merchants occasionally gave orders for cloths up to 30 yards. The cloths were of greater lengths; they were also of better quality and finer workmanship. There seems to have been considerable improvement in this respect since the contest of 1613, and many witnesses in 1638 agreed that the kerseys, although now made of inferior wool, were 'both finer, better made, and of greater value and price than the said kersies were' a quarter of a century before.² Thus, on the whole, Yorkshire kerseys had increased in variety, in length, in quality, and in value.

And yet they were only paying a penny each for subsidy and ulnage! This was bound, sooner or later, to bring about another conflict between the clothiers and those interested in the collection of the cloth fees, and the legal battle took up the years 1637-8. At this time the control of the ulnage for the West Riding was in the hands of Thomas Metcalfe of Leeds,

¹ Evidence of Wm. Bushfield of Leeds: Exch. Dep. by Comm., 14 Chas. I. Mich., no. 20, York.

² In 1613, average price for Halifax kersey 1s. 3d. to 2s. per yard. In 1638 the cheapest valued at 1s. 10d.; others sold at 2s. 6d. to 4s. 6d. per yard. Even Keighley kerseys, 18 yards in length, sold at 2s. to 2s. 6d. per yard.

described as a gentleman of great estate, but also a merchant who carried on foreign trade in the very wares over which the dispute arose. Metcalfe was assisted by a number of deputies, who lived in the various villages and towns, distributing the pence and collecting the pence. These deputies carried on some other occupation, and did the ulnage work as an additional means of livelihood. Some were yeomen, and might be actually engaged in making cloth; others were inn-keepers or shopkeepers, or persons of other employments who possessed a little spare time to devote to these duties in return for the two, three, or four pounds which Metcalfe paid them. These 'deputyes' repayre to the clothiers' houses upon notice given, and seal their karseis', though, if the clothier wished, he might go down to the deputy's house and there purchase as many karseis as he required, paying the customary penny for each.

The relations between Metcalfe and the kersey-makers were amiable until October 1636, but in that year the former decided to raise the fee to $1\frac{1}{2}d.$, since the cloths were now much larger to be allowed to escape any longer on payment of $1d.$ Metcalfe therefore instructed his three chief assistants, Thomas Lister, Christopher Seaffe, and John Crabtree, to demand an additional $\frac{1}{2}d.$ per kersey from the clothiers, and these men were so successful in their threats and cajoleries that they were said to have wrung an additional £100 out of the clothiers of the four parishes in a short space of time.

Four men stood out in sturdy opposition, and refused to pay the extra toll. These men were Thomas Lister, Robert Hall, James Robinson, and Nathan Drake, clothiers who lived in or near Halifax, and who bore the brunt of the fighting. Lister, Robinson, and Drake already had several cloths sealed on the penny toll of payment; these were packed up ready for carriage to London when the ulnage officials came and demanded an additional halfpenny on each cloth. They were met by a refusal, and the clothiers proceeded to dispatch the pieces on the backs of pack-horses, escorted by two carriers, to the metropolis. The deputies decided to follow the carriers, and seize the goods en route. They therefore made their way southwards, and took the loaded train of pack-horses at Wombwell, where the carriers were resting for the night, at the end of the first

day's journey. Here the horses were stabled, the packs stored away, and the carriers retired for the night. At three o'clock in the morning (October 20) they were awakened by noises outside, and on making investigations found the three deputies busily engaged in tearing open the packages of cloth. The two carriers rushed out and defended their charges with success, but the deputies had already opened some of the packs, and had scattered the cloths about in the yard of the inn, so that they were 'much spoiled and made unfit for sale'. Scaife, perceiving that the carriers were making a strong resistance, fetched the constable of Wombwell, and, by reason of their official status, the deputies had the carriers arrested, taking the packs, containing thirty-three kerseys, into their own possession. On November 5, 1636, a similar raid was made on the wares of James Robinson, another Halifax clothier. Robinson had dispatched a pack of ten cloths to York. All these pieces bore ulnage seals, for which Robinson had paid a penny but had refused to pay the additional halfpenny. The deputies therefore determined to seize the offending pack, and just as the carrier was bringing the load over Kirkstall Bridge, near Leeds, his horse was seized, led to a house near by, and Robinson's goods were confiscated.

In making these seizures, the deputies felt somewhat dubious about the rights of their case, and they therefore reinforced their position by pointing out that not only ought the kerseys to pay three-halfpence, but also that, being 20 to 21 yards in length, they were above the legal maximum of 18 yards allowed to kerseys by the Act of 1623.¹ This Act, still nominally in force, was in actual practice a dead letter, and few Yorkshire kerseys were less than 18 yards in length. Nevertheless, for want of some better justification, the deputies were ready to invoke the assistance of an obsolete law, and to declare that their seizures were made in the interests of the majesty of law and the purity of industrial life.

The four clothiers did not agree with these contentions. They stated that as their goods were all properly sealed the action of the deputies was entirely unwarranted, and they complained that by reason of the confiscation of the goods they had 'lost

¹ Statute 21 Jas. I. c. 18

benefitt of their market, and will be putt to great charges
 expences in getting ye same againe, and their said karseis,
 opening and throwing in ye dust, are much spoiled and
 unfitt for sale'. They therefore instituted proceedings
 st Metcalfe and his subordinates, and the case was opened
 Court of Exchequer in 1637.

their bill of complaint,¹ the Halifax men indulge in the
 ary eulogy concerning the industrial activity of their
 'by meanes of which trade and of godly and true
 on there professed and embraced, manie thousand of his
 subjects are nourished and exercised in godly labour,
 the poore people and theire families honestly mainteyned
 virtuously brought up, a great number of impotent and
 persons relieved, manie godly Preachers mainteyned, and
 Ma^{ties} Revenues much encreased'. There is boasting con-
 cerning the 22,000 persons engaged in the four parishes in
 making, the £40 per month distributed to the Halifax
 the ten additional preachers maintained, and the claim
 by the speciall grace of God there is not one Popish
 inhabitant inhabiting in the great and populous parish' of
 Halifax. The clothiers also state that the cloths exported from
 the four parishes furnish the Customs officials with over £6,000
 per annum, and as eleven kerseys paid about £1 for customs
 fees, the export of kerseys must have been between 60,000 and
 70,000 each year. All this, declare the clothiers, is effected 'by
 travell and industry of the people dwelling there, the places
 they inhabitt being soe mountainous and rough, soe
 barren and unfruitfull as it will not suffice to yield victualls
 the third part of the inhabitants, and the poor that spin the
 there, though they work very harde, cannot gaine for
 their labour fowre pence a day towards their livinge'. The
 plaintiffs then complain of the illegal impositions and infamous
 practices of which the deputies have been guilty, namely the
 extortion of the additional halfpenny, the seizure of the cloths,
 the refusal of the deputies to come to the clothiers' houses
 sent for; 'by means whereof yo^r Orato^r and other ye

1. Bills and Answers, Mich., 14 Chas. I, York, no. 485. The whole
 documents relating to this case have been transcribed by Mr. J. Lister,
 and placed them at the writer's disposal.

Clothiers aforesaid have been much impoverished and hindred, and the trade of clothing much decayed in their parts and a great sort of people undone and forced to live unprofitably for wante of worke, to ye great hurt of ye weale publique and his Ma^{ties} subjects in those parts, and to ye great diminution and impairing of his Ma^{ties} customs and duties for exportacion of Northern kersies into forraigne countries'. Finally, as if the above pleadings are not sufficient, the plaintiffs conclude with a grim and almost pathetic picture, which might do credit to any modern book on poverty. They point out that the levy of the additional halfpenny would produce £200 per annum, and 'ye greatest waight of ye said exaccion will fall uppon very poor people y^e are sore oppressed with ye same, who making every week a coarse kersie, and being compelled to sell ye same at ye week-end, and with ye money receaved for ye same to provide both stuffe wherewith to make another ye weeke following, and also ye victuals to susteyne themselves and their families till another be made and sold, by which means ye said poor and distressed people, making hard shifts with continuall labour to preserve themselves, their wives and children from begging, are nevertheless constrained out of their necessities to yeld and contribute every week one halfpenny a peece more than is due'.¹

The procedure was similar to that of the suit of 1613. Commissioners sat at Halifax and Leeds, and here hosts of witnesses were called to answer the long series of questions put before them. Young men and old, clothiers from the parishes, drapers, chapmen, merchants of Leeds, aldermen of York and Customs House clerks from Hull, all gave their evidence. All bore testimony to the increase in the length of cloths, but all were equally emphatic on the recognition of the custom of paying only one penny for subsidy and ulnage.² Metcalfe eventually recognized the hopelessness of his case, and therefore, 'after he had spent a greate deale of money, did desist the suite and accept of a penny scale'.³ For the second time the 'penny custom' triumphed, the force of an old-standing usage out-

¹ Exch. Bills and Answers, Mich., 14 Chas. I, 483.

² Exch. Dep. by Comm., Mich., 14 Chas. I, York, 20-1.

³ The actual verdict is missing, but this quotation comes from the suit of 1676. Exch. Dep. by Comm., 28 Chas. II, Mich. 29 (York; Lancaster).

ing considerations of changed circumstances. But the case was not finally settled even then, for in 1676 the whole was raised once more. The actors were different, but the plot was the same. The verdict was also the same as in the previous suits, but there was occasional trouble between the judges and the clothiers¹ until the ulmage expired, at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The evidence presented by the witnesses in 1638 enables us to take some interesting side-glances at the character of industrial life during this period. There are many varieties of people engaged in the manufacture and sale of cloth, and though there is a rigid stratification it is possible to classify the Stuart textile workers into the divisions which were studied in Chapter III. There was the small clothier making one piece weekly, and selling it from hand to mouth; the yeoman, who combined agriculture and industry, either making cloth, or finishing it, or acting as a broker; the large clothier, with his flock of spinners and weavers, and his apprentices learning their trade under his care. These small clothiers often bought pieces from the small men of the country, and sold them along with the cloths of their own manufacture to London or Yorkshire merchants. The great centres of York and Hull now drew their supplies of cloth from the West Riding generally, whilst Leeds merchants, chiefly the great firms,² formed a large proportion of the witnesses in the suits.

The dealings in cloth were carried on in two ways: either in open markets and fairs, or according to orders given by the merchants to the clothiers. To the cloth markets of Leeds, Wakefield, and Wetherby the clothiers brought their goods once a week.

There was a case concerning the sale of ulmage seals in 2-3 Jas. II, Hil. 1688 (Lancaster). The Yorkshire suit of 1638 was followed in 1640 by one in Lancashire (*D. S. P., Chas. I., cccclxxxv.* 61). Here the complaint was that the ulmager 'hath by many indirect practices endeavored to extract farr greater fees, and from some hath by threats obtained the same, and to others hath denied the scale to make them subject to imprisonment and forfeiture, and instituting Exchequer proceedings, by which our trade of Clothynge is like to be overthrowne, and our poor people to perish for want of employment'.

The following Leeds merchants: Wm. Busfield of Leeds, merchant, 28 years; Richard Lodge of Leeds, merchant, 28 years; John Banes, of Leeds, merchant, 26 years; Wm. Sykes, Leeds, chapman, 33 years; Michael Sykes, Leeds, woollen draper, 30 years; Wm. Lodge, Leeds, chapman, 30 years.

or twice a week, or sent cargoes to Blackwell Hall and Bartholomew Fair. Here the cloths were sold either directly to the merchants, cloth dressers, and dyers, or, as was often the case, to a middleman. This middleman, factor, or chapman, occupied an important position in the mercantile world of this period and his chief business was the purchase of cloth on commission for absentee merchants. To give one instance of the middleman's methods: a certain chapman, giving evidence, declared that he bought Keighley kerseys, half-fixed, mingle-coloured and ordinary kerseys, from clothiers in Wakefield market, then taking these wares to York, he sold them to merchants for exportation.¹ Or secondly, cloths might be made to the order of the merchant. If the merchant required only the standard types of cloth he could satisfy his needs through the ordinary open markets; but if he desired to obtain some special quality or some cloth of more than ordinary length (30 yards, for instance), he ordered it from some clothier. Also, in many cases merchants developed permanent connexions with particular clothiers, who therefore made their goods with the intention of selling them privately to one or two merchants.

During the years between the suits of 1613 and 1638 there had been considerable developments in the use of credit. The price of cloth was higher at the later date than in 1613, and witnesses explained this partly by the improvement in the quality, partly by the rise in the price of wool, and partly by the expansion in the scope of credit dealings. One witness summed up the situation when he declared that 'what he sells dearer now, he gives far longer time for payment for them than he did for those he sold a little cheaper of like making and substance thirty years ago', and another dealer stated that 'the clothiers give to the Marchaunts and the Chapman longer tyme with payment'. In most cases a partial payment was made, and a period of six months allowed for the payment of the remainder; one man who sold kerseys for about 43s. received on delivery all above 30s., and gave 'six monthes tyme usually for the payment of the rest'. As such a system came into general use, the need for the chapman became more pressing. The small clothiers, making one kersey a week, could not afford

¹ John Dickson, of Shipley (Exch. Dep., 14 Chas. I, Mich., 20-1 York).

for six months for payment. They needed to be paid on delivery of the piece, in order to be able to buy wool and cloth for the forthcoming week. Hence, they must sell their cloth to a man who was willing to trade on cash terms, a man with spare capital, who could afford to wait for his returns. The merchant was the man who filled this position.

In the making of kerseys, the supply of wool was a pressing matter for the clothiers. They had been accustomed to using other qualities of northern wool, and also the fleeces of Yorkshire and Leicestershire. In the thirties, however, there had been a heavy demand for the wool of these two counties, since southern clothiers were now using larger supplies of wool from these sources. This had been partially instrumental in causing an increase in the price of Lincolnshire wool. In 1610 it had risen to 14s. in 1638,¹ and there had been no improvement in the quality of the material. Cloth makers of cheap cloths were compelled therefore to augment their supplies of Lincolnshire wool by drawing upon cheaper grades from Ireland, Scotland, and other parts. This would have caused the production of an inferior quality of cloth, had not the clothiers paid attention to the improvement of their methods. This raising of the standard of workmanship, in carding, spinning, &c., had been very considerable. Nearly all the witnesses agreed that the cloths of 1638 were better than the fabrics of 1613, because of the finer workmanship.

The discussion on the wool supply led many witnesses to a comparison of the relative merits of Yorkshire cloths and those manufactured in other clothing areas. All admitted that Yorkshire fabrics were inferior in quality to those of East and the West of England, although 'the wolles of Lincoln and Leicestershire are as fyne wolles as the wolles of Kent, Suffolke, Norfolke, Cambridgshire, and Huntingdon.'

The wools of Wiltshire were no better than those of northern parts, and yet Wiltshire pieces sold at much higher prices than the Yorkshire woollen goods. The greatest contrast, however, came in comparing the cloths made in different parts of the country. The increase was also partly due to the general rise in prices which was going on throughout the period.

from the same wool. The clothiers of Suffolk and the West of England were using large quantities of Lincoln and Leicester wool. The cloths which they made from this raw material sold at the rate of 12s., 20s., and in some cases 26s. a yard, while the Yorkshire fabrics made of wool from the same sources only commanded 3s. or 4s. This superiority of the south was explained as being due to 'the Industry and Skilfulnes of the Manufactor thereabouts. On this point some witnesses gave greater detail. One declared that 'he conceaveth the good sortinge of wolles in the Southern partes is the reason why the clothiers in the South partes doe make their cloathes fynner and of greater values by much than the Northern kerseys and cloathes are made of, though the wolles be alike in fyneness from the sheepe'. Another witness stated that the contrast was due 'to the good dying of the Southerne cloathes, the skil' of the manufactors, and the carefull sortinge of their wolles, but he holdeth the principall reason to be the well-sortinge of their wolles', and a third witness concluded with the optimistic assertion that 'if the clothiers in Yorkshire would as well severally and carefully sorte theire woolls as the cloathiers in Wiltshire doe, the same might be made as good cloathes as the cloathes in Wiltshire are ordinarily'. Evidently the West Country clothiers had developed their processes to a high level of perfection, and had built up the reputation for high-class work which they retain to this day. The reason may have been that the industry in those parts was more capitalized than its northern rival, and was therefore more highly organized and carried on with a greater degree of division of labour. It may have been that the Yorkshire clothiers were content to keep to their lower qualities of fabrics, and did not deem it worth while to raise their industrial methods to a high state of efficiency. But whatever the cause, it is evident that the Yorkshire manufacturing processes were still inferior to those of other counties, and that the produce in consequence could not bid for a place in the high-class textile markets of Europe.

In the conflict with the ulnagers, the clothiers had been completely successful, but they were soon to be faced with another danger, beside which all previous troubles sank into insignificance. The relations between Charles I and his Parlia-

... were now growing very strained, and the Civil War was about to be a grim reality throughout the land. On January 1, 1642 Charles attempted to arrest the five members; on April 23 he refused admission to Hull, and finally, after a short stay at York, he set up his standard at Nottingham, on June 22.¹ The political tension had begun to exert an unhealthy influence on trade months before the actual outbreak of hostilities, and in April 1642 the clothiers of 'the Parish of St. Andrew the Vicaridge of Halifax and other partes adjoyning' presented an account of their grievances to the King. In their petition the clothiers complained of the various 'illegall prescriptions and impositions', and then went on to state that they had been 'diversely vexed and grieved with Sealinges, Searchings and like devices most rigorously executed by promoters and officers, . . . by which means not onely considerable sommes of money have been screwed out of your Petitioners' purses, but also divers of the meaner sort have beene utterly disabled to followe their trades, their stockes being exhausted by those inventions'. With the assembling of Parliament in 1640, the clothiers had hoped for redress of these grievances, but with the quarrel between King and Parliament all their 'hopes of peace and justice have become over-clouded by hopeless fears, . . . especially because merchants, fearing what evill may ensue upon these distractions, do not take up . . . as they used to doe'. Hence stocks lay dead in the hands of the clothiers, 'and many thousands of poore people, who by subsist by spinning and cardinge of . . . woolles, are like to be brought to suddaine want, for want of worke'. The clothiers therefore besought the King to take steps to restore peace and security to the merchants, such as would allow them 'to goe on comfortably in their vocations'. Charles was appeased by protesting that the political troubles were not of their seeking, and promised to bestow upon the clothiers any redress which they could 'in Reason or Justice ask, or Heereafter get'.²

Such promises were as vague as they were plentiful, and the situation of the clothiers went from bad to worse. July came round,

Ransome and Acland, *Handbook of English Political History*, p. 95
 Brit. Mus., E. 144 (6). Printed copy of petition

and with it the time for the midsummer shipment of cloth from Hull to the Continent. But Hull was in the hands of Sir John Hothorn, who had defied Charles in April, and who now refused to allow a ship, laden with cloth, to sail, declaring that he could not spare any men from the town.¹ This prevented the Yorkshire piece from reaching the market at Hamburg, and reacted disastrously upon merchants and makers alike.

At the outbreak of the war, Yorkshire was divided in allegiance. The King's party predominated in the agricultural districts and amongst the gentry. York was a royalist stronghold, and the King's supporters also held the castle of Scarborough, Pontefract, Knaresborough, Tickhill, &c.² Only Hull and the manufacturing areas of the West Riding was the Parliamentary cause in favour, and here, to quote Clarendon,³ 'Leeds, Halifax and Bradford, three very populous and rich towns, depending wholly upon clothiers, naturally maligned the gentry, joining themselves under the command of Lord Fairfax and Sir Thomas, his son. When hostilities commenced, however, Leeds and Wakefield were actually in the hands of Royalist troops, whilst Bradford and Halifax were garrisoned in the Parliamentary interest. Such an arrangement was fatal to any continuance of trade, for these four towns were most intimately connected. Wakefield was a large market for kerseys and wool, Leeds was a finishing centre and the home of many merchants. Further, Wakefield blocked the road to the London markets, and could prevent cloth from going south and wool from coming north. Leeds was on the highway between the cloth area and York, and controlled the road along which food supplies came into the West Riding. Some rearrangement of forces was very necessary before any trade could be revived, especially after the Royalist attempt to capture Bradford on December 18, 1642. The clothiers of Bradford and Halifax began to urge their leader, Sir Thomas Fairfax, to some decisive action, and on January 9, 1643, Fairfax wrote to his father, 'These parts grow very impatient of our delay in beating [the Royalists] out of Leeds and Bradford, for by them all trade

¹ *Hist. MSS. Comm., House of Lords Cal.*, v. 38. Petition of West Riding clothiers.

² See general histories of Yorkshire.

³ Clarendon's *History of the Great Rebellion*, Clarendon Press edition, vol. II, p. 494.

provisions are stopped, so that the people in these clothing towns are not able to subsist, and indeed so pressing are these [that] some have told me if I would not stir with them, they must rise of necessity of themselves'.¹ A fortnight later, on May 23, Fairfax took the offensive, and seized Leeds, an action which did strike such terror into the Earl of Newcastle's army that the severall garrisons of Wakefield, Sherburn, and Thirsk fled all the way presently, before any assaulted.

The clothing district was thus entirely in the hands of Parliamentary forces; but the victory was short-lived, for Fairfax had only a small army, and after the victory of Newbottle at Atherton Moor (June 30) Royalist troops captured many clothing towns, and held them until larger Parliamentary forces entered Yorkshire, smashed up the King's supporters at Marston Moor (July 1644), and drove the Royalists out of the county.

After Marston Moor the Civil War was practically at an end in Yorkshire as concerned, but those twenty months of fighting (December 1642 to July 1644) had brought the terrible sufferings upon the clothing population. Leeds and Bradford, bombarded and captured time after time, were among the most severely. At Bradford the tower of the church was used as a centre of defence, and was fortified by being covered with sheets and packs of wool, the property of the clothiers. Joseph Lister describes it, in his account of the Royalist attack after Adwalton Moor, as follows: 'We took great precaution and again hung sheets of wool on that side of the tower facing the [Royalist] battery. They presently began to play their cannon upon us with the greatest fury and animation possible, so that their shot cut the cords whereon the sheets of wool were hung, and down they fell, which the [Royalists], immediately perceiving, loudly huzzaed at their fall.'² When the Royalist troops entered the place they ransacked it, destroyed everything of value which they could lay hands upon, pulled down houses, ruthlessly destroyed property, confiscated arms and live stock, and generally wreaked their vengeance on the clothiers.

¹ *Fairfax's Memorials of Civil War*, i. 33, quoted in *Yorks. Arch. and Topogr.*, i. 91.

² Extract from Fairfax's letter, quoted by Miss Law, *The Story of Bradford*, i. 107.

little town which had made such a sturdy resistance.¹ Bradford paid heavily for those years of strife, not only in property and industry, but also in life. The entries in the parish register² indicate the extent of that misfortune:

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Baptisms.</i>	<i>Marriages.</i>	<i>Deaths.</i>
1639	209	61	183
1650	113	38	117
1739	182	94	134

The town had never been so important as Leeds, Halifax, or Wakefield in the output of cloth, and petitions from the West Riding cloth-makers of the early seventeenth century always mention these three towns, but never speak of Bradford. Now, after the sufferings of the Civil War, its trade in woollen cloths declined and became practically negligible. Later it arose from its ashes in the eighteenth century, not as a woollen, but as a worsted centre. Even in 1739 the above figures seem to indicate that the population of the town was smaller than that of a century before.

The plight of Leeds was scarcely less pitiable. Held by the

¹ When some semblance of peace had been restored, Bradford clothiers began to petition the Commons for relief from the burdens which they had borne for the Parliamentary cause. They speak of houses burnt down, of woollacks employed as defences against the enemy's cannon, of goods plundered and spoilt, of wives and children starving, and of themselves bankrupt and in despair. If not actually engaged in fighting, the town was being called upon periodically to raise money for the maintenance of troops, and to supply men. Witness the following documents coming from the pens of Bradford men after the war: (1) To Fairfax: 'The humble petition of the Inhabitantes of the Towne of Bradford. Whereas there is charged and ymposed vpon our Towne, by one warrant lately from your hono^{rs} for a daily Assesse to the value of 25s. and 000d. per diem, And wee have bene putt to 200 and 50 lbs. charges in Billitting of Souldiers man and horse for these 16 dayes last past. Wee humbly beseech yo^r hono^{rs} That you would bee pleased to take it into Consideracion, and to consider of our former Annoyance, and what wee have suffered. And that yo^r Hono^{rs} would be pleased to release us of this daily Assesse (for God knowes) wee cannot gather itt of our poore neighbors in regarde of their poore and weake estate (*in regard Trading failes*)' (Add. MSS. 30096, f. 58. See also *Hist. MSS. Comm., House of Lords*, Report vi. 193). (2) The Petition of Isaac Elleston of Bradford, clothier, states that he was a supporter of the Parliamentary cause, for which he lost the whole of his goods, value £130, when Bradford was captured by Newcastle. His only son was slain at Bristol, 'and yo^r petitioner being an aged man of 75 yeares and in great debt and past his labour, having nothing left to preserve his life . . . Humbly beseeches your Highnes to take his . . . and distressed condicion into your pious and serious consideracion' (*D. S. P. Interr.*, lxxiii. 57 (1654)).

² James, *History and Topography of Bradford*, p. 144.

lists, captured by Fairfax, recaptured by Newcastle, and taken by the Roundhead army, its loss of life and property very great. At the orders of Fairfax and 'for the greater good of the town' many clothiers burnt their houses to the ground and destroyed at the same time most of the implements of their trade; and in 1647 these men had still received no compensation which would enable them to return to their work or provide new stock-in-trade.¹ The mortality in the town rose from 523 in 1642 to 1,104 in 1643,² though whether the increase was due solely to deaths by fighting or to an outbreak of pestilence one cannot say. In the Riding generally, the poor were in dire straits, for 'all trade and business was interrupted and laid aside'.³ The supplies of foodstuffs from the Vale of York were never sure of reaching their destination, and the heavy assessments and billetings drained the last few shillings out of the pockets of many. Then when the Royalists were victorious for a short space of time, they ransacked towns and villages, confiscating all they could lay hands upon. Large numbers of the poor inhabitants fled to the solitudes of the fens or across into Lancashire, where they succeeded in obtaining some slight relief so long as their homes were in the hands of the enemy.⁴

As for trade, it was either impossible or was carried on under the greatest difficulties. When Marston Moor destroyed the Parliamentarian power in Yorkshire the county subsided into a state of comparative peace, and trade via York and Hull could be carried on, though there were still the difficulties and dangers of the high seas to be encountered. But internal commerce between the north and the capital was fraught with much insecurity, for here one had to carry goods through two hundred miles of a country divided against itself. In a few places this traffic was actually continued with success, as in the case of Thomas Priestley, a member of the famous family which had its home at Soyland near Halifax. This family

¹ MSS. Comm., vi. 188 (b), July 19, 1647.

² Thoresby's figures, in MSS. in Thoresby Soc. Library, Leeds.

³ *They Memoirs*, Surtees Soc., vol. lxxvii, p. 20.

⁴ *Out MSS.*, *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, vol. x, pt. iv, p. 67, October 12, 1643.

Lieut. of Lancashire ordered that 'Yorkshire poor exiled from the Riding and now residing in this county shall have relief out of the contributions of Royalist property.'

ranged itself on the Parliamentary side, and paid heavily for its devotion to that cause. Its house was plundered, and members of the family were forced to seek refuge in Lancashire; the father died a prisoner in the hands of the enemy, and one son died of fever whilst serving in the ranks. The father, however, cared for none of these things. He escaped the war fever, and continued his business as a chapman throughout the whole period of the war. He bought cloths in the West Riding, and journeyed to London with eight or nine pack-horses, travelling in company with one or two other venturesome spirits. Sometimes the party hired a convoy of armed men to protect them on the journey; at other times they travelled without any protection. And yet Priestley 'was never taken, he or his horses or goods, all that dangerous time'. He made regular journeys up to London, and realized about £20 clear profit on each trip.¹ Such a man was exceptionally fortunate, and many others who ventured to continue their commercial dealings during the period of the war met with a very different fate.

Scarcely was the sphere of military activity removed from the West Riding when the coping stone was added to the archway of misfortune which had been built over the lives of the cloth-making population. This took the form of a further outbreak of pestilence which on this occasion eclipsed by its severity the memories of all previous visitations.² The cause of the plague of 1645 is doubtful. It may have been due to the usual lack of sanitary provisions, augmented by the after-effects of the war. Whatever the cause, the pestilence swept down upon the district with unparalleled severity. The outbreak began in 1644 and lasted until the last months of 1645. It was especially severe in Leeds, where from March 1645 to the following December 1,325 persons died. During the hottest parts of the summer as many as 130 persons a week succumbed to the disease, and in all it is calculated that about one-fifth of the

¹ *Priestley's Memoirs*, Surtees Soc., vol. lxxvii, pp. 18, 23, and 27.

² The plague attacked most of the northern counties. *D. S. P., Chas. I.*, vol. 506, p. 59 (1644-5), says: 'The sickness is much dispersed of late into severall parts of the country, as Auckland, Darlington, and Wakefield. . . May God in his mercy turn away his judgement of the sword and pestilence and keep us from the other great judgement of famine.'

ation of Leeds was destroyed by the pestilence. According to a chronicler, 'the air was so thick and warm and so infectious that dogs and cats, mice and rats died; also several of their flight over the town dropped dead'.¹ Life in the town became unbearable, and there was a general exodus. 'There is scarce a man to be seen in the streets', reported one writer,² and all who could possibly get away from the town did so, going in rough-and-ready cabins built on Woodhouse Moor, other open spaces around Leeds. The markets were transferred to Hunslet Moor and Chapeltown Green, where corn, wool, &c., were to be brought, but only those who held certificates of freedom from infection might use these markets. The justices for the peace made stringent orders for preventing the spread of the disease. All woollen cloths and wool-packs were to be washed in hot water, or put in a running stream for two days and then dried in the open air. Appeals for relief and financial assistance were made to other parts of the county, and the Corporation of York appointed several persons to 'make collection through the cittie for everie one to give towards the reliefe what they shall thinke fitt, and the ministers to be desired to invite them theirunto'.³ In similar vein, the justices of the West Riding commanded the towns and villages around Leeds to contribute to the relief of the sufferers in the borough,⁴ and these parts needed the money for their own sick, since the plague was scattered throughout the whole clothing area, and was especially confined to its chief market centre. Wakefield lost 1,325 inhabitants in one year, victims of the pestilence, and Kettlewell, Airedale, and other places were stricken with 'the sickness'.⁵ Only when the heat of summer gave place to November's cold and fog was there any great decrease 'of yee sickness which has . . . of late overspread the whole West-Riding',⁶ and by that time the population of many a clothing

¹ Whitaker, *Loidis and Elmete* (1816), i. 76. The task of recording the number of deaths reported to the Governor-General of the town.

² As for Leeds it is utterly spoilt; there is scarce a man, &c.' (Graham MSS., *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, vi. 329, July 16, 1645).

³ York House Books, xxxvi, f. 138 a. July 1645. A similar step was taken at the request of the inhabitants of Bradford (House Books, xxxvi, 154 a).

⁴ *Yorks. Arch. and Topogr. Journal*, xv. 437 et seq.

⁵ *Graham MSS., Hist. MSS. Comm.*, vi. 329.

⁶ *Yorks. Arch. and Topogr. Journal*, xv. 454.

community had been terribly thinned. The years from 1640 to 1650 were a dark decade in the annals of Leeds, Bradford, and Halifax, and the effect is briefly summarized in the following vital statistics for the City of Leeds:

Year.	Births.	Marriages.	Deaths.
1640	557	157	561
1650	345	69	345
Decrease	38 %	55.5 %	38.5 %

Or, if we take triennial averages, the fall between 1630-41 and 1640-51 amounted to

Births, 37 %; Marriages, 62 %; Deaths, 33 %.

Thus, taking the figures of births and deaths, we are justified in supposing that quite *one-third* of the population of Leeds had been swept away in those ten years of sword and pestilence.

During the years of the Commonwealth Yorkshire was busy attempting to recover from the exhaustion of the previous decade, but there was little if any progress. In 1654 the Corporation of Leeds declared that 'tradeinge at present is beginninge a little to revive',¹ but there were many obstacles to be overcome. The war with Holland and the prevalence of piracy rendered the North Sea very dangerous to cloth ships, unless well convoyed. But the Government was quite unable to provide adequate, or even inadequate, protection, so that the export trade suffered heavily, and, as the Leeds merchants wrote to Adam Baynes, 'the countrie in generall did smart by it, and eecho'd forth dolefull complaints'. Thus, at the end of a period of constitutional chaos and economic blight, the country poured out its complaint to Monk in 1659, when asking for the restoration of a free Parliament in place of the parodies of the Interregnum. Fairfax, the staunchest of Parliamentarians, joined with 'the rest of the Lords, Knights, Esquires, Citizens, Ministers and Freeholders of the County and City of York' when they declared themselves to be 'deeply sensible of the Confusions and Distractions of the Nation, the particular Decay and Ruine of the Clothing Trade of this County, which necessarily bears an influence upon the Publick'.² Another letter

¹ Baynes Correspondence, xi. 224.

² See Cunningham, *Growth*, app. E, vol. ii, pp. 921-7.

York about the same time stated that the 'Trade of . . . being dead . . . makes those Parts rise in abundance anything for the having of a Free Parliament, which they will procure the opening of Trade again'.¹ There were who for political and religious reasons were bitterly opposed to the Restoration, but the great majority of the people were willing to submit to any change which might dispel the gloom of depression in which industry and commerce had been developed. The Commonwealth had been only common for many, and the nation welcomed the return of Charles II with hope of a better time coming. Whether or not these hopes were realized we shall see in a later chapter.

It seemed desirable to dwell at some length upon these gloomy aspects of the industry's development. Our conception of progress often needs to be modified. We look at the progress of the woollen industry in the sixteenth century, and turn to the state of affairs of our own times. The difference is very marked, and we are apt to explain it as being the result of constant and steady development, such as might be represented in a curve that mounts higher and higher as the years pass, without any break in the continuity of its ascent. The illustrations narrated in this chapter will have proved the error of this idea, for they will have shown that industry fluctuated up and as frequently in the seventeenth century as in the sixteenth. The woollen industry in 1660 was probably some way ahead of its position at the accession of James I, and less progress had actually been made. But that progress had been checked and at times more than cancelled for a time. War, pestilence, famine, and international politics had played their part, and if the clothier or merchant now looked forward to a period of peace and progress, he was quite warranted in hoping for rich recompense after the years of stress and strain through which he had just passed.

¹ 100 B. 15, February 13, 1659. Brit. Mus. 190. g. 13. (317), quoted by Cunningham, *op. cit.*, ii. 920.

CHAPTER VII

STUART EXPERIMENTS IN INDUSTRIAL REGULATION - GILDS AND COMPANIES

In an earlier chapter we have considered the various attempts which were made to regulate the cloth industry with a view to maintaining a high standard of commodity. The gilds had their ordinances and searchers, and when the industry spread over the extra-urban areas the State drew up appropriate legislation, and ordered the appointment of searchers, whose duty it should be to detect fraudulent work and bring offenders to justice. The last of a long series of acts was passed in 1623,¹ and fixed the lengths, breadths, and weights of the chief kinds of cloth which were then made in England. The statute laid down rules concerning the extent to which cloth could be stretched in tentering, and gave detailed instructions as to the duties of the searchers, the amount of the fines, and the objects to which the fines were to be devoted. But in spite of laws and searchers the evil still remained, and complaints about faulty cloth are to be found throughout the early seventeenth century. The searcher was often a clothier, or the friend of clothiers, and we have at least one instance of a searcher who was also a clothier taking advantage of his official position to have a tenter frame of dimensions which were illegal according to the very laws he was employed to enforce.² Sometimes the searcher was an ale-house-keeper, who would naturally do nothing to offend his customers, and so, notwithstanding the presence of the searcher, there were still 'many false clothiers who make bad and slight cloth'.³

The difficulties of the searchers were enhanced by the flood of 'new draperies' which had sprung up during the latter half of the sixteenth century. These cloths were new varieties intro-

¹ 21 Jas. I, c. 18.

² John Tottie of Wakefield, Clothier: 'being appoynted one of the searchers of Wakefield did alter the size of his Tenter and made the chase thereof bigger than was agreed and sett downe by hym and the residew of the Searchers of Wakefeld aforesaid' (*West Riding Sessions Rolls, Wakefield, 1598*, ed. by Lister, p. 133. See also Quarter Sessions Order Book, A, p. 132 (1640))

³ *D. S. P., Chas. I, ccccviii. 15.*

partly by the refugees who came to England during the
 of religious upheaval on the Continent; they were also
 result of English attempts to imitate foreign wares. There
 Bays, 'Stamells of florence sorte, Searge of ffrench sorte,
 of the flauders sorte, Mockadowes of everie sorte, Carrell
 of Naple, Blanketts called Spanysh ruggs, etc.'¹
 May declared in 1613, 'there are many sorts of cloths
 tuffes lately invented, which have got newe godfathers to
 them in ffantasticall fashion that they which weare them
 not howe to name them'.² These cloths could evade the
 stipulations by passing under some name for which there
 no provision in the current statute. True, they had been
 hit under the scope of the ulnager's impositions in 1594,
 James I had given the ulnage of both new and old draperies
 the hands of the Duke of Lennox; but the aim of the
 er was the collection of revenue rather than the propagation
 industrial ethics, and hence the searcher, unaided by the
 ger, found himself baffled by the bewildering complexity
 cloths to which he had to attend.
 the failure of the searcher to meet the needs of the situation,
 the interested vigilance of certain classes of men, brought
 the demand for some better mode of regulating industrial
 From many sides men preached that the immorality in
 try was due to the absence of organization, and to the
 adual freedom which was allowed by the State. Repre-
 tives of existing companies and corporations were always
 to declare that the decay in trade was due to the existence
 interlopers and others outside their particular association.
 drapers of London explained the depression of 1622 as being
 ly caused by the operations of inexperienced cloth-makers,
 sold the cloth either directly to the consumer or to hawkers
 carried it to the villages and towns throughout the country.³
 Therefore, to remedy such evil, let the cloth be sold by drapers
 , and let the arm of the Drapers' Company be strengthened
 rdingly. In a similar vein, May⁴ declared that 'the
 rsing of clothiers and makers is a principall cause to breede
 defects' in cloth, and urged that industry should be carried

Originalia Rolls, 36 Eliz., July 13, pt. iii.

J. S. P., *Jas. I*, cxxx. 140.

¹ May, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

² May, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

on only in towns. This idea of the necessity for bringing industry more under the control of economic organizations became very popular during the reign of James I and Charles I, and suggestions for the institution of a number of corporations were frequent. Since the local government official had proved a failure, let a local trade association be formed to regulate and maintain the standard of craftsmanship in that particular trade. Such an association would represent the best industrial interests of the district, and so, backed by local opinion, its officials would be able to carry out their police work with greater hope of success. The idea found favour with the Commission which was chosen to report on the causes of the depression in 1622. This Commission, it will be remembered, condemned the robe making of cloth as being one of the causes of that 'stand of trade'. In its recommendations it suggested

1) The simplification of the laws concerning cloth, for 'the lawes now in force concerning the makinge and dressinge of cloth are so many and by the multitude of them are so intricate that it is very hard to resolve what the law is'. Also the issue of 'playne rules and easy to be observed . . . for new draperies'.

2) 'That a Corporation in every Countie be made of the most able and sufficient men . . . to look fullie to the trewe makinge, dyeing, and dressing of cloth and stuffs . . . and not truste to meane men'. These corporations were to have their searchers, and the ulnager was not to place his seal on any cloth until it had been 'searched, tryed, and proved by such as shalbe appoynted'.¹

Some writers were in favour of a corporation in which the clothiers and merchants should be entirely self-governing; but in most of the schemes the suggestion was that the organization should be dual, containing representatives of the industrial and commercial interests on the one hand, and representatives of the Crown, such as justices of the peace or the Lord Lieutenant of the county, on the other. Some urged that such societies should be established in each of the clothing counties; others suggested the incorporation of the chief clothing towns, and the granting of charters which would create municipal authorities with considerable powers of control over the industry of the

¹ Stowe MSS. 534, f. 45.

activity. But though varied in detail, all these numerous motions agreed upon one essential point, namely that the control of industry must now be placed in the hands of local institutions, in which the leaders of local economic life were to take place.¹

Such recommendations, which had been in the air prior to 1600 and now became insistent, were partly responsible for the revived revival of industrial association which took place about 1600. Old companies took on larger powers,² and new ones were established in various parts of the country. In the cloth trade we have already seen some of the York shires striving to regain control over their particular branches of industry. The suggestions outlined above were attracting attention, and a scheme was drawn up for the establishment of corporations in thirty-two counties, for the regulation of the manufacture of the new draperies which were becoming important during the seventeenth century. Only one county, Wiltshire, actually set up such a corporation, and the life of this institution was short.³ The Government of Charles I. was too busily engaged in foreign affairs during the early years of his reign, and hence the scheme for the erection of these county associations remained a scheme. We shall see, however, that the idea was not abandoned, but that an organization of a different character was instituted at a later date to supervise the woollen-cloth industry of the West Riding.

Though the proposal was put aside for the time being so far as the counties were concerned, less ambitious suggestions were put upon. The establishment of corporations had been urged for cities and towns as well as for counties, and it is in this

¹ See e.g. 'A redy course propounded for the establishment and certaintie of the Manufacture of all maner of draperies, &c.' (Add. MSS. 34324, f. 201 (1622)). Also Report of Commissioners of Trade (1640), in *Report MSS., Hist. MSS. Comm.*, vol. viii, pp. 2-3.

² See Unwin, *Industrial Organization during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Also Cunningham, *op. cit.*, ii. 303-5.

³ Add. MSS. 34324, f. 201. See also *D. S. P., Chas. I.* i. 24 and 62. The topic of these provincial corporations still remains to be worked at in more detail. The idea of an association controlling the industry of a wide area was very strong during the seventeenth century, and many attempts were made to put such an idea into practice. Mr. Unwin's work is largely confined to London. But much light still remains to be thrown upon the nature of these county organizations, as well as upon the actual work and nature of the companies which were still to be found in the provincial towns.

connexion that we turn to the story of the incorporation of Leeds. Leeds was one of a number of towns in which cloth corporations were set up, Bury St. Edmunds, Ipswich, and Colchester being other centres to which similar attention has been given; and it was out of this need for industrial regulation that the Corporation of Leeds came into being. The preamble to the first Leeds charter emphasizes the economic aspects of the town's life, and declares that the charter was granted for the improvement of the industrial 'tone' and for the fostering of industrial honesty. Leeds historians have regarded this as a picturesque but irrelevant preamble, bearing no actual connexion with the real motives which prompted the incorporation of the town. When, however, we regard the charter of 1626 and its successors in the light of the Stuart policy of regulating industry by corporations, we see at once that the economic factor was probably the predominating influence in the granting of civic powers.

During the half century preceding its incorporation Leeds had grown in size and industrial importance. Its population had more than doubled between 1576 and 1626,¹ and it was now established as the centre of a district occupied in making broad cloths, superior in size and quality to the kerseys which were made in the Halifax area. The Leeds market was already famous, and here the merchants of Leeds, along with traders from York and London, purchased the pieces from the clothiers. When, in 1616, James I established staple towns for wool in England, Leeds immediately petitioned the Privy Council, asking to be placed on the list of staple towns in order that the sale of wool in the West Riding might be carried on with ease and official sanction.² The request was granted, and Leeds remained a staple so long as the new arrangements were adhered to.³

During the years of depression in the early 'twenties complaints came from Leeds concerning the deceitful practices of clothiers and dyers, especially in the use of logwood for dyeing.

¹ Annual average (for parish of Leeds) :

	<i>Births.</i>	<i>Marriages.</i>	<i>Deaths.</i>
1570-80 . . .	150	37	142
1621-5 . . .	349	79	352

² Cunningham, *op. cit.*, ii. 298-9 n. Also *D. S. P.*, *Jas. I*, cv. 147.

³ *D. S. P.*, *Jas. I*, xcii. 28. Also Jackson's *Guide to Leeds* (1889), pp. 36-7

It had been the subject of legislation in the time of Edward III, and an Act of 1580 had declared that 'forasmuch as colour made with the said stuff [was] false and deceitful', therefore, all existing stocks of logwood were to be seized and burned by the authority of the justices of the peace, and forth no logwood was to be used under pain of forfeiture of cloth, and imprisonment of the offender. This Act was renewed in 1596 by a statute which ordered that fines and punishments should be additional punishments. Such legislation occurred occasionally, as for instance in 1598, when Thomas Holbeck, clothier, was indicted for 'dying wooll Wollen cloth' with logwood or blockwood.¹ But in spite of such prosecutions the practice continued. The clothier who dyed his cloth or cloth in his own dye-vat required some inexpensive dyeing material for his cheap cloths, and logwood met his need in that respect. Hence the grievance of those who sought a charter for the incorporation of the town was expressed in the charter,² that the 'fame and estimation' of Leeds was being ruined by 'divers clothiers [who] have begun to make deceptive cloths and to dye the same with wood called logwood, to the great and prejudice of [the Crown], subversion of the clothiers of the town and the discredit of the inhabitants there if immediate remedy for that purpose be not applied'.

A petition asking for a charter was said to be presented by the 'clothiers and inhabitants' of Leeds, but really it was the demand of the wealthier clothiers and merchants of the parish, not the demand of the whole community. Documents are scarce concerning this first charter, but the few manuscripts which are extant seem to point to the fact that those who sought a charter in the charter did so with a view to gaining control over the industrial and political affairs of the community, and that in their effort they were opposed by a considerable body of the population of Leeds. The opposition probably came from the poorer clothiers, who were scattered over the thirty-two square miles which comprised the ancient parish of Leeds. The charter was partisan, and those who worked to obtain it did so

¹ *Riding Sessions Records*, ed. by Lister, p. 174: 'Logwood alias wood callide ac deceptive usitavit'.

² Charter; see Wardell, *Municipal History of Leeds* (1848), appendix.

with the intention of establishing a royal or municipal control over the town and its multitude of cloth makers. The cloth of rivet pattern is one of the articles of our cloth, relating to the incorporation of the borough. The petition for a charter had been made in 1622 or 1623, and the charter was drawn up in accordance with the wishes of the petitioners. On December 21, 1624, came a protest from the opposite party.

'The inhabitants, being many hundred of people, deserveth of the Corporation fully procured by some of the ablest men of Leedes for their owne ends, in the name of the whole Towne, without the Consent of the greater number, and to their prejudice, deserveth a reference to Sir Thomas Wentworth, Sir Henry Savill, Kth, and Baroth . . . and to examine the conveniency or inconveniency of the said grant, and to certify his Majesty thereof.'¹

Note the phrase 'the ablest men of Leedes for their owne ends.' It evidently refers to the industrial and commercial magnates who were seeking to obtain the charter, and expresses the hostility of the poorer inhabitants. This opposition succeeded in delaying the incorporation for a while, and the death of James I caused still further delay. Eventually, however, opposition was swept aside, and on July 18, 1626, Charles signed the charter which incorporated 'the Borough of Leedes in the County of York'.

The economic significance of the charter is seen throughout, from the preamble onwards. 'Whereas our town of Leedes . . . is an ancient and popular town, and the inhabitants . . . for many years past have had and lawfully exercised . . . the art or mystery of making and working wth len cloths, commonly called in English 'Northern Dozens', to their perpetual praise and great increase of the Revenue of the Crown of England for the custom of the said cloths'; and whereas complaints have been made of deceptive manufacture and dyeing of cloths, 'and divers other enormities and inconveniences for some time have sprung up and do still increase as well concerning the cloths aforesaid as the town and parish aforesaid, which in no way can be reformed without good rule by our royal authority and power established, and whereas the former methods of government have failed to

¹ Harleian MSS. 1327, p. 9 b, December 21, 1624. See also Atkinson *Ralph Thoresby, his Town and Times*, vol. i, p. 20.

these clauses; therefore Charles made the town and into a borough with a proper corporation, consisting of thirteen 'nine-penny' burgesses, and twenty assistants. Four were nominated in the charter. The powers of this corporation are fully defined, and two paragraphs indicate the manner in which the newly created body was to regulate its affairs.

We will and do grant that the Council shall and may have power and authority to enact, constitute, make, and establish such reasonable laws, statutes, and ordinances which to them shall seem wholesome, useful, honest, and necessary, . . . for the fit, good, true, and perfect working, making, and selling of cloths from time to time, . . . as for the good rule and government of the whole body of citizens.

Secondly, and more important, 'we do grant to the aforesaid citizen and burgesses . . . that for the better government of the inhabitants, . . . especially the workers and labourers for making woollen cloths, . . . they shall have all reasonable gilds, that they shall and may be able to divide themselves into such fraternities, Societies, and mysteries, . . . and that no company or gild . . . shall have power, authority, or jurisdiction, constituting, ordaining, or making of any statutes, laws etc., to bind any burgess or inhabitant, . . . unless they shall have authority, power, and licence to make such laws . . . from the Alderman, and Common Council . . . under their common seal as they first had and obtained.'¹

It was the corporation of 1626, a body of men chosen to legislate, to issue by-laws for the regulation of industry, to grant permission for the formation of sectional economic organisations or gilds under the general supervision of the council. The personnel of the corporation was drawn from the men who secured the charter. Sir John Savill, who had conducted the campaign in London, was nominated first alderman, and the burgesses and assistants were nearly all prominent clothiers and merchants. John Harrison, the famous clothier and philanthropist, was chosen as deputy-alderman, and Richard Sykes, Thomas Metcalfe, Benjamin Wade, William Busfield, Ralph . . . and others, men in the front rank of local industry and commerce, found places on the council. The corporation was an oligarchy. Its charter had been 'procured without

¹ See Wardell, *op. cit.*, appendices, for translations of charters.

a generall consent of ye Clothiers and inhabitants',¹ and the first members were nominated by the King. When vacancies occurred, new members were elected by the council itself, without any appeal to the wishes of the great mass of clothiers outside. With such a divorce between the corporation and the industry which it was set to govern, friction was inevitable and an important dispute soon arose.

This conflict between the town and its rulers centred round the provisions made in the charter for the establishment of gilds. The clause concerning gilds was vague in one respect. Did it mean that the formation of gilds and companies was optional, and that the various industries could organize themselves into associations only if they felt inclined to do so? Or did it give the corporation power to compel the clothiers and others to enrol in such trade societies? The point was disputable, and furnished the basis for what must have been a keen conflict. Many members of the council adopted the compulsory attitude, and did their utmost to secure the institution of gilds, so as to increase the power which the corporation possessed over the various industries. On the other hand, a majority of the clothiers was averse to such organization. The clothier enjoyed a certain measure of individual freedom and was at liberty to develop his industry along the lines which seemed most suitable to his needs and circumstances. True, there was legislation touching apprenticeship, dimensions and quality of cloth, &c., legislation administered by the local justices. But these enactments weighed lightly upon the clothier, and he did not conform to the strict letter of the law except when it pleased him to do so. Hence he was antagonistic in the first place to a corporation which might curb his freedom by a strict enforcement of rules which he had held in light esteem in the past. If the erection of a corporation signified the substitution of a keen and active urban administration for the easy-going methods of the justices of the peace, then his sympathies were decidedly against the innovation. Further, he was opposed to the institution of additional restraints in the form of gild regulations. As a clothier, he was a man of many parts, especially if his establishment was of any size. He went to buy his own wool, he employed people

¹ *D. S. P., Interv., cxxxii. 7.*

spin that wool, he dyed and wove it himself; probably he did part of the finishing himself, and then marketed the fabric. His activities were varied, and were marked by a large measure of elasticity and freedom. Now, if the gilds were to be set up, he would be subjected to a host of regulations and hindrances such as would destroy that sense of freedom. There would be fines and fees to pay, and if the gild system became minutely sectionalized he would be compelled to enrol himself as a member of several gilds, or might have the variety of his occupation curtailed. These were the doubts which would arise in the mind of the Leeds clothier, objections based on the dislike of further and more thorough supervision of his work, and fears as to the restriction of his economic liberty. Hence, many clothiers had been opposed to the incorporation of the borough, and were now inimical to the formation of gilds and companies.

Soon after its institution, the municipal council began to insist on the establishment of fraternities, and at once there was opposition from the clothiers of the town. The details of this struggle are scanty, and are best narrated in the following petition, presented from Leeds in March 1629:¹

The humble petition of Robert Sympson, and Christopher Jackson, and many thousands of poore Clothiers of the parish of Leeds in the County of York,

Sheweth That whereas it pleased your most excellent Ma^{ty} your I^{res} patents dated the 12 day of July in the 2nd yeare of your Ma^{ty}'s most happy Raigne to incorporate the said towne and parrish for the better increase of the Trade of Cloathing, And your highnes said I^{res} patents did give Liberty and power to the said parrishioners and inhabitants to distinguish and divide themselves into guilds and fraternities, not giving authority to the Aldermen and assistants there to inforce or compell any to bee Companies unlesse they willingly submitted thereunto.

Soe it is . . . that the present Alderman, (beeing an Attorney at the Comon Lawe) and a few of the Cheife Burgesses, for the abuse of their owne authority and for their owne gaine (as the petitioners conceave) and not for the good of Cloathing, contrary to the goodwill and liking of most and of the best of the parrish (there beeing not the fortieth part of the Clothiers that consent thereunto, as the petitioners hope to make it appeare)

¹ *D. S. P., Chas. I, cxxxix. 24, March 21, 1629.*

endeavour to inforce the petitioners to bee a Company and to submitt themselves to such Rules and constitutions as they shall please to make, to bee fined, imprisoned, and called from their Labour at their wills.

'Your petitioners show that many of them dayly setting on worke about 40 poore people in their Trade, and that compelling them to come hither [i. e. London] (dwelling 150 Miles hence) tendeth much to their impouerishing and overthrowe of their trade.'

Therefore the petitioners pray that the King will be pleased 'to referre the examinacion [of the matter] fully unto such Lords, Knights and Gentry of the County as shall seeme best to your Ma^{ty} and whoe best understand the nature of Cloathing.'

The King referred the whole matter to the Council of the North, along with Sir Henry Savill, Sir Richard Beaumont, Sir John Ramsden, and two other prominent Yorkshire personages. Of the result of the deliberations we know nothing, but evidently the companies continued, for the next document relevant to Leeds (1639) refers to the 'Companies that now are in that Borrough'.¹

This document is a petition from the corporation itself, asking for parliamentary representation, and is of such interest from the economic point of view that I venture to quote it at some length. The petitioners strongly emphasize the industrial importance of the borough;

'wthⁿ ye . . . Corporacion and places adiacent, great Quantities of woollen clothes are yerelie made. . . . And in all theis Northe partes where clothe is now made, there is no place Incorporated but y^e pet^{rs} wherby y^e regulacion and true making of cloth might bee provided for. And that this corporacion of Ledes, nor any Clothing towne in this county, are not enabled to choose any burgesses in parliament to have voice upon any occasions arising touching abuses or other matters of Cloathing. Nor none can be see apt or able to judge of as those who live amongst theis places of Cloathing, and have use and experience of their deceipts and of ye Conveniences and Inconveniences of ye lawes already made or w^{ch} may be propounded touching the same, and that y^e most part of Cloathing townes in y^e Kingdome have one or two Burgesses in parliament for the purposes aforesaid.'

The petitioners, therefore, asked for a number of important

¹ D. S. P., Chas. I, cccxxxix. 5, 51, and 6.

hours, the chief of which was that the town might have two members in parliament.

The corporation pleaded its case very powerfully, and appended to the petition a number of reasons why the town should be enfranchised. These statements are doubtless to some extent exaggerations, but they contain a great deal of truth. The chief assertions were :

'There is Cloth made in this Corporation of the value of two hundred thousand pounds, and most of it is yerelie sent beyond the seas. His Majties Customes for Cloth made in this parish and exported amounteth to above 10,000^{li}. per annum, besides the Customes of foreigne comodities for ye said Clothe into yo^r Majties kingdome imported. . . . Ye people that make this cloth are laborious and industrious, and this trade growne of late yeres and much increased since the towne was incorporated. Noe parte of the Kingdome can afford clothe soe reasonable, by reason of Cole, wood, Mills, and house rent as this part, And by well ordering and true making Noe doubt by God's blessing this trade will daylie encrease. . . . All places of the Kingdome where Clothe is made have Burgesses in parliament and by reason thereof in former tymes Sundry Lawes were made much to the prejudice of the clothing of theis parts, because they never had (till the late Lo^r Savyle's time) any man in parliament experienced in the clothing of this Countrey. By this trade the Countrey subsists and many thousands of poore people, woomen and children set on work, and many able men maynteyned in labour fitt for yo^r Majties Service upon any occasion. . . . The pet^r upon all occasions of publique charges and taxes for his Majties service have beene willing and forward.'

In short, the men of Leeds declared their industrial greatness, their loyalty, and their sense of the injustice of being ruled without enjoying representation.

Leeds did not get its member of parliament, and the grant of a new charter with a mayor and aldermen was only made by Charles I at Nottingham on the eve of the Civil War,¹ when the outbreak of hostilities prevented this new constitution from materializing. At this time the town was divided in its allegi-

The wealthy merchants, who comprised the municipal government, were Royalists, but the great mass of the people were Parliamentarians. When the town was occupied by the Parliamentary forces the corporation fell into abeyance, and

¹ *D. S. P., Interr.*, cxxxi. 7, and *Chas. II*, xxviii. 71.

from 1643 to 1646 the government of the town was in the hands of Major-General Carter.¹ In 1646 the corporation was restored on the lines of the charter granted twenty years before, but all Royalists were excluded, and their places taken by supporters of the Parliamentary cause. The new-comers carried on the oligarchic tradition of their predecessors, and ruled the industrial population with a heavy hand. Hence, in 1656, a monster petition signed by about 850 clothiers and inhabitants of the town and parish of Leeds expressed the grievances against the council:

'They doe rule and act illegally as may appeare by their unjust By-Lawes, and Ordinances (whereby they oppresse ye poore Clothiers and much prejudice that Trade), theire unlawfull Taxes put upon the people . . . theire imprisoning men's persons, etc., . . . to ye great damage and disquiet of ye Inhabitants and disturbance of ye publique Peace.'²

From this time onward the demand for a new charter grew in force, and with the accession of Charles II that document was obtained, placing the government once more in the hands of the 'wealthiest and best affected merchants and inhabitants of the Towne of Leedes'.³

The industrial activities of this new corporation can be studied in some detail, since the Minute Books of the council from 1662 onward are still available, and give a fair picture of the manner in which the city rulers attempted to supervise industry and commerce during the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Before turning to the consideration of this work, it will be best to glance for a moment at an attempt which was made to establish an organization to regulate industry over the whole field of the West Riding. This corporation had a short life, and we know practically nothing of its actual work; but the project serves to illustrate the manner in which the idea of supervision by local organizations was put into practice in Yorkshire.

The powers of the Leeds corporation were circumscribed by the boundary of the borough. Within that limit the municipal

¹ List of Aldermen (MSS. volume in Thoresby Soc. Library): '1643-6 in ye Wars a Vacancy'.

² *D. S. P., Interr.*, cxxx. 7.

³ For this, see proceedings of Council of State, *Chas. II*, i. 78, p. 63. Also *D. S. P., Chas. II*, xxviii. 71; xxx. 28; xl. 62.

authorities administered both the laws of the nation and their own by-laws touching the making and finishing of cloth. Outside the boundary such work was carried on by the justices of the peace, and the searchers whom they appointed. Thus it might be supposed that whilst the laws against excessive tentering and dishonest manufacture were administered with exemplary thoroughness within the borough, clothiers outside the pale were allowed a great amount of licence. This might be possible because of the leniency of the justices of the Riding, the slackness of the searchers, or by reason of the fact that the rural clothiers were scattered over a very wide area, stretching from Wharfedale in Yorkshire, and from Wakefield to the borders of Lancashire. The disparity actually did exist, and hence, whilst Leeds clothiers were subject to constant supervision in the manufacture of broad cloths, their fellows outside the boundary were producing similar fabrics, comparatively immune from police inspection. During the Civil War the system of search broke down for a while, but in 1647 the restored Corporation of Leeds determined to resume work. The alderman and burgesses therefore approached the justices of the Riding and complained 'of the great decay of the trade of Cloathing, and more especially of broad cloth, commonly called "Leedes Cloath", occasioned by ye great deceit therein used, in making Tenters of a farr greater size than by the statute is limited, and other sleights and subtilties by diverse of ye clothiers practised, to the great contempt of those countryes to w^{ch} ye same [is] transported, and to ye great shame and slaunder of all ye good clothiers in these Northern parts'. In consequence of this complaint, the West Riding magistrates promised to co-operate with Leeds in a crusade against illegally constructed tenters; they were to track the offenders in the clothing areas of the Riding, whilst the Leeds Corporation set its own house in order. 'Whereupon the Alderman and Burgesses caused ye tenters within ye . . . borough to be reformed and proceeded in such other lawfull courses as to ye regulacion of ye said trade, expectyng ye like to be done in all parts of ye said Ryding.' The justices, however, failed to fulfil their promise, and took no steps to administer the law. In consequence, the allowance made for the movement of the movable parts of the frame, which did the actual stretching.

cloth laws. Thus the clothiers of Leeds were 'moche greived and molested, they beeing onely restreyned' whilst their rivals outside the borough were allowed to continue their malpractices free from interference. In January 1655 the corporation drew the attention of the magistrates of the Riding to the injustice under which the Leeds clothiers were labouring, and the bad workmanship which was being permitted to continue in the rural areas, which, 'if not reformed, when tradeinge at present is beginninge a little to revive, will inevtybably tend to ye absolute disgrace, if not faile of trade in these parts, and soe consequently not onely impoverish ye clothyer, but many others thereupon depending.' Leeds asked that the statutes concerning tenters should be put into operation throughout the Riding, frames either reformed or defaced, and proper seals of lead placed upon cloths, stating their length and weight. Further, in order to ensure the equitable and effectual administration of these measures, the corporation suggested that 'some speciall persons may be joyntly commissioned to acte together, as well within as without the Borrough'.¹ The justices did not accept this last suggestion, but they ordered their searchers to be more careful and thorough in their duties, 'and to see that noe tenters for broad cloathes have chase or liberty for or to the under barr above halfe of a quarter of a yard, and for narrow cloathes above halfe of halfe of a quarter, but that they shall presently deface the same, according to the statute upon paynes and penaltyes mencioned.'²

The suggestion of the Leeds Corporation that joint officials should be appointed is a weak reflection of a strong policy which some of the broad clothiers were advocating about this time. Broad cloths were made in all the district round about Leeds, especially at Birstall and Wakefield, and the clothiers of Leeds were probably experiencing the keen competition of these outsiders. They therefore wished to bring the broad clothier who dwelt outside the city under the same control as themselves, either by having a broad clothiers' corporation for the whole Riding, or by extending the scope of the Leeds municipal regulations to all broad clothiers, whether within or without the borough. To bring about this result they enlisted the services

¹ *Baynes Correspondence*, xi. 224, January 1655.

² *Ibid.*, xi. 148

Adam Baynes, the Leeds representative in the fitful parliaments of the Interregnum.¹ In August 1654² a petition of the more affluent broad clothiers of Leeds was dispatched to Baynes, in which the cloth magnates declared that the best way to better the trade of Leeds would be to carry out the following proposals:

1. 'That the hole trade of brode cloth making . . . in the Countie of Yorke maye be incorporated into one bodie politick.'

2. 'That soe many officers maye be chosen by the holle number of clothyers as may be thought requisit ffor the carrying on the worke, with a certan number of asistants and a Comor. Councell.'

3. 'That they [the executive] have power to chuse officers and overseers to put the lawes in execution provided ffor good trade, and to gain [extension] where they are short, if needs be.'

Such an organization would almost inevitably place the control of the industry throughout the whole Riding into the hands of the few wealthy Leeds clothiers, and so establish the supremacy of Leeds and of the more important and opulent men in that borough. The proposal was, therefore, strongly opposed by the 'adverse partie', which consisted of the clothiers living outside Leeds, at Wakefield, Birstall, and in the open districts generally.³ These men made a hard fight against the Leeds magnates. They attempted to get Baynes's election declared null and void, and sent several deputations up to London to state their case before Cromwell.⁴ Baynes, however, pursued his mission with eagerness, and succeeded in obtaining a commission of inquiry into the whole question. The purpose of this inquiry was

1. To study the existing statutes, see where they were defective, and suggest amendments if necessary.

2. Granted that the laws were good, to consider how they might be put into more effective operation.

3. With regard to the second term of reference, to consider what would be more practicable that 'a select number of discreet and able persons, consisting of Gentlemen, merchants, and

Leeds, along with Manchester and Halifax, was granted parliamentary representation in 1653, and Adam Baynes was elected to represent Leeds.

¹ Ingeelwick, *The Interregnum*, p. 93. Also Atkinson, *Ralph Thoresby, his*

and Times, vol. i.

² *Baynes Correspondence*, xi. 210.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xi. 213.

clothiers, be invested with all the power that the Justices of the Peace had by former statutes, with such additional power' as the inquirers should think desirable.¹

Meanwhile, the opposition from without was making itself felt. At a general meeting of the Leeds clothiers all present expressed their willingness to be incorporated, provided the whole of the West Riding clothiers were included. Whereupon the promoters of the scheme were compelled to admit that they 'feared itt could not bee done . . . they having alwayes received such stronge opposicion from the clothiers without'.² For the present, therefore, the scheme fell into abeyance, and the men of Leeds concentrated their energies upon an attempt to get the borough charter modified.

With the Restoration came a flood of charters, reinstating old organizations, such as the Merchant Adventurers, and erecting a number of new corporations. At such a time the scheme of the Leeds broad clothiers was more likely to receive favourable consideration, and the Leeds men returned to the attack. They were successful on this occasion, and in 1662 an Act was passed 'for the better regulating of the Manufacture of Broad Woollen Cloath in the West Riding of the County of Yorke'.³

This statute enacted that 'there shall be a Corporation to continue for ever . . . consisting of all the Justices of Peace of the West Riding, Two Masters, Ten Wardens, Twelve Assistants, and Commonalty. All which [officers] . . . are to be of the ablest and best experienced Clothiers within the Riding, and such as have served and been brought up in the Trade and Mistery of Clothing by the space of seven yeares . . . ; one of which Masters, Five of which Wardens, and Six of which Assistants to be chosen the first Monday after Pentecost annually at some public place by the Free Clothiers . . . inhabiting within the Parish of Leeds'. The other half of the executive was to be elected in like manner by the clothiers residing in the rest of the Riding. Such a society was to be 'one Body Politick and Corporate . . . and . . . a perpetuall Succession, and to be called by the name of the Supervisors, Masters, Wardens, Assistants, and Commonalty of the Trade or Mistery of Clothiers for the well making of Broad

¹ *Baynes Correspondence*, xi. 147.

² Statute 14 Chas. II, c. 32.

³ *Ibid.*, xi. 218.

Woollen Cloath within the West Riding'. The executive was to meet on the first Saturday in each month at the Sessions House in Leeds, and at any other time and place if the members should think fit. Here by-laws, rules, and ordinances were to be drawn up for the better spinning, working, making, fulling, and dressing of woollen cloth, and these regulations, after having been endorsed by the justices of assize, were to be published at least four times a year. Any clothier breaking such rules could be fined up to twenty shillings, half the levy being retained by the corporation, the remaining portion being handed over to the relief of the poor of the parish in which the offender lived.

Searchers were to be appointed to enforce the observance of the ordinances, and to bring offenders to justice. They were to examine all broad cloths, and affix a seal on which was stated the length and weight of the piece. The searcher was given right of entry into houses, shops, and warehouses where cloths were made or stored. These provisions were not intended to replace the tynager, who still collected his pence and supplied his seals. The searcher of the new corporation replaced the searcher formerly appointed by the justices, and enforced not only the laws of the realm but also the decrees of the local trade association.

In order further to guarantee the best possible workmanship the statute made a pronouncement concerning apprenticeship. No person was to make broad cloths unless he had served an apprenticeship of at least seven years to that trade, under penalty of £5 for each month he engaged in the occupation; the penalty was a heavy one, especially as the Act of 1563 inflicted a fine of only £2 per month. A proviso, however, stated that any one might make broad cloths 'for the use of themselves, their Children and families, but not to sell them', without having served the requisite period.

One last clause was intended to safeguard the interests of the employees. It ran as follows:

'Provided alwaies that neither the Supervisors, Masters, Wardens, and Assistants, nor any of them, nor any other persons of the Corporation of Broad Woollen Clothiers shall by any Authority derived from this act . . . set or impose any other or lesser Rates or Wages upon any inferiour Workmen, Servants,

or Labourers to bee employed by them . . . in the said Manufacture than such as shall bee from time to time allowed and approved of by the Justices of the Peace in their Quarter Sessions.¹

This clause was based on the assumption that the minimum wage clauses of the statute of 1603 were being enforced. As we have seen (Chapter III) the justices were actually fixing maximum rates for weavers as for other workers, and no minima were ever laid down.

The men of Leeds had gained their point, and the Corporation of Broad Clothiers was established in accordance with the terms of the statute. Of its actual work we know nothing. It continued until 1680,¹ and was then given another five years of life by a renewal of the Act. In 1685 a further renewal was mooted, but not actually effected.² In 1692³ came a vigorous attempt to reinstate the corporation, when a number of gentry, clothiers, and cloth-workers petitioned the Commons for a revival of the provisions of the Act of 1662. In the petition these men spoke of the divers abuses which had arisen since the demise of the corporation, and asked for its resuscitation. Their request was not granted, and the Corporation of Broad Clothiers passed permanently into the shades, along with many other associations and institutions which were by that time either defunct or in a state of advanced senility. The corporation had been an interesting experiment, an attempt to regulate an industry which was carried on by a widely scattered population, working under domestic conditions. Effective supervision under such circumstances was naturally very difficult, and hence the corporation failed to establish itself as an efficient instrument of industrial regulation. When next the State stepped in to provide machinery for supervising the trade, it had abandoned all idea of a trade association, and reverted to the old sixteenth-century method, by which the justices of the peace and their nominees were to carry on the work.

Meanwhile, the revised corporation of the borough of Leeds, established by the charter of November 1661, had commenced operations, and was making provisions for the control of industry

¹ *House of Lords Calendar, Hist. MSS. Comm.*, vol. xi, pt. ii, p. 163

² *House of Commons' Journals*, ix, 729.

³ *Ibid.*, x, 741

commerce within the town.¹ Additional powers had been granted, and the newly organized body could do much more than its predecessor. In the first place, the borough could hold its petty and quarter sessions, at which all necessary steps were to be taken to enforce the observance of the cloth laws in the realm. At such sessions the dignity of the national law would be upheld, and offenders punished by the municipal magistrates. Secondly, the corporation had power to issue local by-laws for the regulation of the cloth trade in the borough. On this the charter was very explicit, and outlined the *modus operandi* in making such ordinances:

When the mayor of the borough . . . shall judge it just or necessary to make . . . any new laws, ordinances, or statutes, touching the making, dyeing, or sale of woollen cloth, or the art or mystery thereof, . . . then the mayor, aldermen and assistants . . . shall cause to be summoned forty of the most honest and sufficient clothworkers, craftsmen . . . inhabitants within the borough . . . to meet on a certain day and place, which assembly shall be called the common assembly, and then and there may be proposed . . . such laws, statutes and ordinances as the mayor or common council shall think fit to be established, and they shall ask advice thereupon of the said common assembly. . . . Such laws, . . . which shall be assented by the greater part of those present, shall become laws and ordinances, and thence after shall be of good force and effect, and be inviolably observed by all clothworkers, dyers, and merchants, under pains and penalties in the said charter contained.

In addition to these specific powers, the corporation was granted such general rights as were necessary for the full and thorough control of the industrial life of the town.

During the sixty or seventy years which followed the granting of the Restoration charter the municipal authorities attempted, with doubtful success, to carry out the policy which their powers enabled them to formulate. They administered the various statutes relating to cloth, and appointed searchers to see that the laws were respected.² Eighteen searchers were elected

¹ Wardell, *Municipal History of Leeds*, app. xiii.

² Leeds was divided into fourteen districts, for each of which searchers were elected. Some districts only claimed one searcher, others (Farnley and Wharfedale) claimed two, whilst Hunslet had three. See *Leeds Sessions Books*, pp. 147, 164, 284, &c.

annually, and took solemn oaths to discharge their duties faithfully; those who neglected their office, or refused to serve as searcher when appointed, were severely punished, and many such cases actually occurred.¹ On the whole, these men did their work thoroughly, and many offenders were brought to court. Witness two typical instances:

July 17, 1717, a man indicted for attempting to sell a piece of white Birstall cloth, declaring it to be well spun, good and 'merchantable', when really it was badly spun, very deceptive, and unmerchantable, as an evil and pernicious example for other men to do in like manner.²

January 13, 1735. 'Sam Lumley of Stanningley, possessed of one end or half cloth of broad woollen cloth, which had been very greasy, full of holes, null bracks, and not merchantable.' These holes had been artfully, cunningly, and with a fraudulent design sewed up, and the cloth sold to John Berkenhout, a prominent Leeds merchant.³

Many other instances might be given of the manner in which clothiers and cloth-workers were fined for making cloths of deficient length or weight, or for having infringed some clause of one of the Acts passed during the two preceding centuries.⁴

The corporation also made an attempt to regulate and enforce the laws concerning apprenticeship, and to compel all apprentices in the borough to become registered in the town's Apprentices Roll. In 1703 the court of the corporation therefore declared⁵ that 'It is ordered that every Artificer, Shopkeeper, and Trader whatsoever, being a freeman or Burgess of this Burrough, that shall take any Apprentice or Apprentices, shall enter the names of every such Apprentice with the Town Clerk . . . in a book to be kept for that purpose, and pay Sixpence for the entry thereof'. The apprentice then served his allotted period, at the end of which he was able to set up as a clothier, if he possessed the necessary capital, or become a journeyman. In the former case, the

¹ e.g. August 1703, for instance of cloth searcher who 'executionem officii contemptuose et totaliter refusavit et neglexit' (*Sessions Books*, II, 164).

² *Leeds Sessions Books*, III, 28: the above is one out of twenty-six indictments made at that court.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. IV, 13th January, 8 Geo. II.

⁴ In one instance an Act of the reign of Philip and Mary was cited, and a kersey maker indicted of having violated it.

⁵ *Leeds Corporation Records*, I, 408 (1703).

ration made a further claim upon him; 'at the end and conclusion of his Terme, [the master must] bring such Apprentice to a courte of Mayor, Aldermen and Assistants, to take Freedome, which apprentice shall pay for registering such freedom the sum of three shillings and fourpence.' To what extent these rules were enforced it is impossible to state, but it seems that the corporation occasionally awoke to the fact that numbers of apprentices had completed their terms of service, and were setting up as masters without having sought consent as freemen of the borough. On such occasions the corporation issued a sweeping command 'that the severall persons be respectively summoned to appear at the next Court of Mayor, &c. . . . to be held for this Burrough (whereof they have notice), to take their freedoms and be registred as freemen, as the case shall require'.¹ In September 1706 and May 1707² lists of apprentices were summoned to take up their freedom; the list included weavers, cloth-drawers, and carders, as well as barbers, joiners, drapers, and other tradesmen. It is very doubtful whether these men obeyed the summons, for there is no mention of their appearance at the subsequent meetings of the corporation. In its relations with strangers who came to reside in Leeds the corporation seems to have been very fortunate. It would be easier to obtain obedience (and loyalty) from a stranger setting up his home and business in the town than from those who had grown up there, and whose familiarity with its governors might breed contempt for their commands. The corporation kept a sharp look-out for strangers, and occasionally ordered its constables to submit lists of all practising any trade within their divisions who had not taken the freedom of the borough.³ Men from all parts of the county and from all quarters of England were thus constrained to take up the burdens and privileges of citizenship: a stationer from Manchester, a merchant from Hull, a saddler and joiner from Wakefield, clothiers from the surrounding districts, a mercer from Bradford, a haberdasher from York, a linen draper and a jeweller from London, a barber from Oxford, with goldsmiths,

¹ *Ibid.*, ii. 20.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 28-9. In 1706 nineteen persons were summoned; in 1707 forty-

³ *Ibid.*, ii. 235, and ii. 170.

apothecaries, and dyers from other parts. These men came before the Court of the Corporation, took the oath of allegiance to the King and that of a freeman of the borough, paid their entrance fees, and were then admitted to the citizenship.¹

Finally, the corporation attempted to foster gild organization amongst the various industries of the town. Unlike its predecessor, the charter of 1661 made no provision concerning the establishment of gilds and fraternities. The early societies established during the reign of Charles I were probably now defunct, and the new charter gave no orders for their renewal. But this omission was either an oversight or was due to the supposition that a municipal charter carried with it such power and that any town authority had the right to set up as many gilds as it pleased. At any rate, the new corporation took that view of its powers, and one of its first ordinances dealt with this subject. On November 4, 1661, the court declared that

'Inasmuch as all or most of the traders within this Burrough are much decreased, and the poore thereof much increased, occasioned by the undue takeinge of apprentices, setting on worke floreners and strangers, and by fraudes and abuses therein used, ffor Remedy whereof and in pursuance of the Powers and Authority given in His Ma^{ties} Letters Patent, This Court thinks fitt and soe orders that all and any persons using and exercising the trade of a Clothworker shalbe a Guild or ffraternity, and are by this Court constituted a Guild or ffraternity, . . . themselves, their servants, and apprentices, to be guided and governed by and under such Lawes, Ordinances, and Constitutions, as John Dawson, Esq., Major, [and ten

¹ The amount of the entrance fee varied according to the new freeman's occupation, and to the estimated benefit which he would be likely to receive by pursuing his vocation in Leeds. Thus in 1703 it was declared that 'if any stranger for the future shall be desirous to purchase his freedom of the Burrough, it shall be upon such termes as the Court of Mayor, Aldermen, and Assistants . . . shall agree upon, having respect to the trade that he shall exercise within the said Corporation, and the benefit and advantage that he may be presumed to reap thereby' (*Corp. Mins.*, i. 414 (1703)). This consideration made the fine vary to a great degree, and whilst a small trader or clothworker paid only about £2, a strange merchant, seeking his freedom, was charged as much as £50 (*ibid.*, ii. 155, and ii. 165). If the newcomer happened to be one of the many foreign merchants who were settling in Leeds in the early eighteenth century, he was called upon to pay a much larger fine. The English merchant paid £50, but the alien was ordered 'to pay times which shall not exceed thye hundred pounds, nor be less than one hundred pounds for any freedom to be taken by such floren merchant, who shall be naturalized before such freedom is taken' (*ibid.*, ii. 165).

Assistants or Aldermen], or the major part of them shall approve and allow.'

The Company of Cloth-workers, thus established, was not the only one to be instituted, for at the same time the other occupations of the town were brought under similar organized control. The size or nature of some occupations was such that they needed 'guild or fraternitie' of their own, but in other instances kindred trades were grouped into one company, so that in all there were six such companies established by the municipal authorities.¹

These companies had proper constitutions, with executives and officials, ordinances and by-laws for the control of their members. The Cloth-workers' Company strove for a time to further the interests of its members by attempting to prevent any person from working at the art unless he was a member of the fraternity, by protesting against any obstacles which might hinder the sale of Leeds cloth at home or abroad, and by seeking favourable legislation. Thus in 1664² the company joined the municipal corporation in a petition to the King, protesting against the increased charges which the Blackwell Hall authorities had imposed upon Yorkshire cloths going to that market. Similarly,

in 1690 the company was busy attempting to prevent cloth from leaving the West Riding before it had been dyed and finished.³ But in all such activities the companies were under the control of the corporation. Their ordinances carried no weight until they had been sanctioned and engrossed by the local authorities; if any dispute arose amongst the members, the word of the corporation overrode the decision of the company, and if any neglect occurred either in the control of finances or in the election of the executive, the mayor and his fellows held the power to settle the affair as seemed best to them.⁴

¹ *Leeds Corp. Mins.*, i. 27. Dawson was the first deputy-mayor, and the second to fill the mayoral chair. The remaining companies, in addition to that of the cloth-workers, were:

(1) 'Milnewrights, Carpenters, Joiners, Plaisterers, Coopers, and Bricklayers,' i.e. the building trades.

(2) 'Mercers, Grocers, Salters, and Drapers,' i.e. a company of shopkeepers.

(3) Cordwainers.

(4) Tailors.

(5) Ironmongers, smiths, glaziers, cutlers, pewterers, i.e. a hardware company.

² *S. P.*, March 23, 1664, vol. 449, f. 14.

³ *Stowe MSS.* 746, ff. 110, 128, 136, 138.

⁴ See sections on tailors' ordinances, i. 50 and 55.

In short the gilds were the creation of the corporation, and were entirely under the control of the parent body.¹

The absence of any detailed records prevents us from approaching nearer to these Leeds fraternities, and it is therefore dangerous to be dogmatic as to their success or failure between the years 1660 and 1710.² During this time the Corporation Minute Books furnish occasional references which seem to indicate that gild activity was not very important. In 1691 it was suggested that statutory power should be obtained to fuse the six gilds into one company, but the idea did not materialize.³ From 1700 onwards the corporation made frequent demands for the enfranchisement of traders and craftsmen, and during this time the Tailors' Company was very active. The Cloth-workers' fraternity, however, was gradually drifting into desuetude. This continued until 1720, when the corporation, suddenly awakening, made frantic efforts to whip the clauses of the charter and their own powers of industrial regulation into some semblance of life and reality. The demands for a general enrolment of freemen were peremptory, and the slumbers of the cloth-workers' organization rudely disturbed. Witness the minutes of the court held on May 7, 1720:

'Whereas by a long disuse and failure in the Company of Clothworkers in this Corporation to put in force their Orders, by-Laws and Ordinances which have been made for the good Government of the said Company and the Artificers belonging to the same, and for the well making, dying and manufacturing of woollen cloth made and sold within the Burrough aforesaid; and touching the sale thereof great abuses and deceits have crept in, to the great Disparagement and debasing of the said Manufacture and to the great loss and hindrance of the fair and honest Traders therein. And whereas the aforesaid Laws were not sufficient to prevent the inconveniences and abuses aforesaid, for remedy whereof It is thought fitt and Ordered that the aforesaid By-Laws and Ordinances be carefully inspected and revised, and that such alterations and amendments be made therein, or additions thereto as by Council Learned in the Law shall be advised, and that they be prepared and ready to be proposed at the next Court . . . or at a Comon Assembly for the Burrough aforesaid, which shall be called for that purpose, And that the persons following forty names given, being forty

¹ The companies all met in a place known as the Gildhall (*Mins.*, i. 88).

² *Mins.*, i. 418 (1704); *ibid.*, ii. 32-3 (1707).

³ *Ibid.*, i. 313.

the more sufficient and honest Clothiers and Clothworkers inhabiting within the Burrough . . . be Sumoned to appeare at the same time and place, to the end their approbacion may be had to the said By-Laws, Orders and Ordinances as shall then be proposed by the Mayor and Comon Councell . . . for the purpose aforesaid.¹

How this conference ended we do not know. It was the last effort of the corporation to reinvigorate the gild organization, and it seems to have failed most completely. From this time onward there is an entire absence of any records throwing light on the subsequent history of the companies, and it seems that the fraternities died a slow death and perished from starvation and disuse. Even if they had served a useful purpose at the time of their institution (which is doubtful), they had by this time become much too small to be adequate for the proper control of the industries which were advancing so rapidly during the seventeenth century. The woollen industry in particular had entered upon its period of adolescence, and just as a suit of clothes rapidly becomes too small for a youth who is growing at a great rate, so the organization of the Restoration period was eminently unfitted for the nature and extent of the trade which was carried on within the Leeds boundary during the eighteenth century. Thus the corporation ceased to attempt to order and control the cloth-workers, as well as the other branches of economic activity. In 1725 the supervision of the wool cloth industry was handed over by legislation to the justices of the peace and their searchers,² and the Leeds Clothworkers' Company, after existing a little longer as a convivial society, quietly disappeared from view.³

The final years of the seventeenth century and the early decades of the eighteenth witnessed the decline in economic importance of many other institutions which had played a prominent part in the activities of Tudor and Stuart times. This period, in fact, was an era of transition, in which the older forms of organization were breaking down, and the ground was being prepared to some extent for the flood of individualism

¹ *Leeds Corp. Min.*, ii. 159-60, May 5, 1720.

² Statute 11 Geo. I. c. 24.

³ Webb, *History of Local Government* (The Manor and the Borough), ii. 418. Ten pages devoted to the history of the Leeds Corporation by the Webbs contain much valuable information on the work of the corporation.

and the great changes which were to create modern commercial society. The Leeds gilds disappeared, the West Riding Broad Cloth Corporation had already made its departure. These were comparatively mushroom growths, but they were accompanied in their demise by such old-established institutions as the ulnager, the companies which had developed out of the mediaeval fraternities, and the big trading companies of the Eastland Merchants and the Merchant Adventurers.

The ulnager had continued to be collected, though it was somewhat neglected during the Interregnum.¹ In 1664 the grant of its farm had been renewed to the Duke of Lennox for a further period of sixty years, and, on the death of the Duke in 1672, the farm was transferred to his widow.² The ulnager was now purely a revenue machine, and its officials did nothing to administer the cloth laws relating to dimensions, weight, or quality. In the West Riding it had become customary for the clothiers to buy a large number of seals from the local representative of the ulnager, and affix them to the cloths which they had woven. In one case, for instance, a witness in a lawsuit of 1676 declared that he was accustomed to fetching one hundred seals at a time from the ulnager, then fixing them to the cloth without any representative of the ulnager being present. This practice was forbidden in a similar suit during the reign of James II (1687),³ and clothiers were expected to have their cloths examined and weighed before the ulnager's seal was affixed. The old practice continued, however, so long as the ulnager was levied.⁴

¹ *D. S. P., Chas. II*, xvi. 87 (1660): 'Since the late war divers clothiers and others, taking liberty to themselves by the disorder of the late tymes, have and still doe putt sett and send to sell divers cloathes . . . without payment of the said subsidye'.

² *Treasury Books*, 1672-3, February 19; *Calendar*, p. 67. Lennox paid £900 for the old draperies, and £98 for the new.

³ *Exch. Deposition by Comm.*, 2-3 Jas. II, Hil., York and Lancs., 14.

⁴ Witness the following letter written by Joseph Holroyd, a cloth-factor of Halifax, who acted as ulnager's representative for the West Riding during the early years of the next century:

ffarm^r of Aulnager

Srs

Halifax y^e 25th 9^{hr} 1706.

... I desire y^e to Send by first Carriers 4 a 5000 1st Scales. If y^e please may make itt up 1 horrese pa: wth 2 a 3,000 1st and 1,000 1st the rest 3^d Scales.

I am

Yors, J. H(olroyd).

(*Letter Books of Joseph Holroyd and Sam Hill*, ed. Heaton (Bankfield Museum Notes). See nos. 81, 94, 100.)

By the end of the reign of James II there had grown up a considerable amount of opposition to the ulnage fee; many were demanding that the office should be abolished, and the loss to the Crown compensated by increased customs dues on exported cloth. The Yorkshire clothiers were amongst the strongest supporters of this suggestion, and in 1693 they petitioned the House of Commons, declaring that the office 'is now useless and always answers the end of its first constitution, but is become very burdensome to the subject, and a great hindrance to the woollen trade'.¹ The farmers of the ulnage naturally opposed the destruction of their office and means of revenue; they pointed out that the patent granted in 1664 had still thirty years to run, and they did not intend to renounce such a profitable investment. Hence, though many bills were introduced to bring the institution to an end, all failed, and the ulnage did not finally expire until the termination of the Lennox licence in the reign of George I.²

The two great cloth-exporting companies were also rapidly falling from their former high estate, and were losing the monopoly they had enjoyed during the early years of the seventeenth century. The Civil War had affected adversely the trade of both Eastlanders and Adventurers, and when the Commonwealth was established the opponents of the companies prevailed. The charters of the organizations were not annulled, but suspended, the companies were deprived of their monopolistic powers, and 'interlopers' were granted liberty in foreign trade. With the Restoration, this 'anti-company' policy was reversed, and by confirmation of their charters in 1661 the two companies were restored to their old position. But the day of great things was now past, and from the Restoration onwards both bodies declined from their former strength. The entrance fees were being reduced very substantially, and the session had thus become comparatively cheap and easy.³ Once begun, the process of pulling down the walls of privilege could not long be stayed, and in the first year of the reign of

¹ *House of Commons Journals*, xi. 16. Also *House of Lords MSS.*, *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, xiii, pp. 225-6.

² Also *House of Lords MSS.*, *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, xiv, pt. vi, p. 42.

³ For this later history of the Adventurers, see Lingelbach, *Introduction to Newcastle Merchant Adventurers*, Preface to volume ii.

William and Mary there was much agitation in favour of 'a general liberty to all persons to export [woollen goods] to Hamburg', the very centre of the Adventurers' activity. This campaign ended successfully, and in the same year an Act was passed allowing freedom to all who wished to trade in what had formerly been the preserves of the Merchant Adventurers.¹ Such a statute would materially affect the merchants of Hull, York, and Leeds, whose control over the export trade in Yorkshire cloths would thus be destroyed. They therefore made many attempts to obtain a revision of the above Act, and pleaded for the re-establishment of the power of the Hamburg Company under 'such regulations or other provision . . . for carrying on the trade in a regulated way' as the Commons should think best.² In 1693 the Merchant Adventurers declared that they were willing to allow any Englishman who was not a handicraftsman to be 'admitted into the freedom of the . . . Company for forty shillings, to trade within all their limits, except the Rivers of Elbe, Weser, and Eyder'. In other words, would-be merchants were allowed to enter the company at a very much reduced fee, and then trade over a large part of the Merchant Adventurers' territory. This arrangement pleased neither the Yorkshire Adventurers nor the House of Commons, for the former thought it opened a way to infinite debasement and fraud, whilst the latter refused to make any alteration in the statute of 1688.³

In similar fashion the power of the Eastland Merchants was being undermined. The records of the Eastlanders of York end in 1696. The last thirty years had been spent in an acrimonious correspondence with Hull, and in violent quarrels with the Eastland Merchants at head-quarters; and now at the last meeting, with only six members present, there was no indication (except in the smallness of the attendance) that the branch had come to its 'extreme day'.⁴ The quantity of cloth exported by the whole company throughout the realm had fallen very heavily during the middle years of the century. In 1640 the export was said to be 120,000 cloths annually, whilst in 1670

¹ Statute 1 William and Mary, c. 32.

² *House of Commons Journals*, x. 759.

³ *Ibid.*, xi. 80-1.

⁴ *Ordinances of the Eastland Merchants*, ed. by Miss M. Sellers, p. 139, and Preface.

number was stated to be only 11,000.¹ These figures are probably far from accurate, but they express an exaggeration of an actual fact, namely, that the old monopoly was breaking down, and that the outsider was engrossing more and more of the foreign trade. This decline continued during the rest of the century, and although the York branch probably did not actually cease after that last recorded meeting of January 27, 1696, it gradually ceased to control any appreciable proportion of the British cloth trade.² The York Merchant Adventurers were more numerous; their influence was stronger; and so they continued throughout the eighteenth century as a trading society, though deprived of the monopoly which had formerly been theirs. They pursued a rather conservative policy, clinging to the old traditions and customs in an age which was needing more and more individualism and progressive thought. Hence they were left behind in the great developments of the eighteenth century, and the major portion of the foreign trade in cloth passed into the hands of others. Still the organization survived, and exists even to this day. A flood of new life has been infused into it by the historical labours of Dr. Maud Sellers, which have done much to remind the citizens of York of the former greatness of what was once the driving force in the foreign trade of that ancient city.

This decline had two important consequences. In the first place, it gave Englishmen freedom to engage in foreign trade unimpeded by the restrictions and regulations of the trading monopolies. Secondly, it allowed foreign merchants to trade with greater ease between this country and their own shores. This second possibility affected considerably the trade in Yorkshire cloths, and many foreign merchants settled in Leeds and other parts of the West Riding during the eighteenth century. In the discussions which followed the establishment of free trade to Hamburg, Leeds merchants continually expressed their opinion that the new conditions would certainly flood Yorkshire

¹ *England's Improvement*, by Roger Coke, p. 21, quoted in *Ordinances of the Lend Merchants*, Preface, p. li.

² Eastland Merchants were existing in Macpherson's day (*Annals of Commerce*, (1805), iv. 166).

The Adventurers meet in Trinity Hall arrayed in proper robes, have sermon preached; also go to service every 27th of January.

with foreign merchants, who would take the trade out of the hands of the Englishman. This contention availed nothing, and the risk of such a foreign invasion was braved. The influx of foreign merchants actually did take place, in the person of such aliens as John Berkenhout,¹ a native of Hamburg, who played an important part in the economic life of Leeds as a trader in cloth. These foreigners were looked upon with great disgust by the native clothiers and merchants, and the whole attitude of the Yorkshiremen is seen admirably in a petition sent by them to the House of Commons upon the subject, drawn up some time during the reign of Anne.²

• The petition

'Sheweth that the Incouraging the Exportation of Manufactures by her Majesty's natural born Subjects directly to Germany in a Regulated way of trade, exclusive of foraigners would, as your Petitioners humbly conceive, With due Submission to the great Judgement of this hon^{ble} House, be for the generall benefitt of the Nation. That since Forreigners have been suffered to export the said Manufactures they have occasioned them to be debased, and not to be so truly made as formerly, wherby the esteem thereof abroad hath been lessened and Forreign Manufactures Incouraged, and a long Credit hath been introduced and many losses hath happened to ye Clothiers of their debts to a considerable value; the Members of the Company of Merchant Adventurers, who whilst they were supported were generous traders, exported great Quantitys and paid well, have been discouraged and doe not send out near such Quantitys as formerly, and severall of them have wholly left off ye said trade, which it is feared will in a little time come wholly into the hands of Forreigners, and Occation an irreparable damadge to the Nation; that the supporting of the said Company in their . . . trade to Germany would as ye Petitioners conceive be a means to prevent and put a stop to those evils provided ye said Company were obliged to admit all her Majesty's subjects into ye freedom of there Society upon easy terms.'

In spite of such protests, the old barriers to freedom of interchange were swept away, and we are in the throes of the eighteenth century. That century is of the greatest interest,

¹ See Thoresby Soc. publications, vol. iv, p. 226. Berkenhout died in 1759.

² This is the petition of 'divers Clothbuyers, Clothiers and Clothworkers and others concern'd in ye Woollen Manufacture in Hotherfield and places adjacent' (Cookson MSS. in Thoresby Soc. Library).

because it is such a wonderful mixture of the old and the new. In it we have the decease of so many ideas and institutions which either had their origin in mercantilist theories, or which even pushed their roots down into the soil of the Middle Ages. And at the same time the new movements which are to dominate the modern economic world are already groping through to the light. The century which lay between 1750 and 1850 was one of stupendous development in industry, commerce, and in the relations between these branches of national life and the State. But this progress would not have been so easy or so rapid had it not been for the manner in which the systems and organizations of the former age were passing away during the first half of the eighteenth century. A new order was knocking at the door asking admittance. When it did gain entrance it found the old more or less swept and garnished. There were still many survivals of the former system, but the great landmarks which had so strongly characterized the Tudor and Stuart régimes were gone, and their places were waiting to be filled by the ideas and institutions of a new world.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM THE RESTORATION TO THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION -THE PERIOD OF PROGRESS

THE years which lie between the accession of Charles II and the coming of the Industrial Revolution constituted a well-defined epoch in the development of the Yorkshire textile industry, and on the whole comprised a period of progress. The progress, however, was far from unbroken or constant. The reign of Charles II was marked by depressions quite as acute as those of the Commonwealth, and similar spasms of bad trade occurred during the subsequent century. But in spite of the black outlook at the commencement, and the periodical blasts of misfortune, the epoch is one during which the cloth-makers of Yorkshire prospered, and built up a powerful industry, before steam and machinery came along to point the way to still greater progress.

When Charles II came to the throne economic society was smarting under the effects of twenty years of civil strife and political disorder. The complaints of bad trade which came from all parts of the country in 1659 were quite justified, for industry and commerce were alike under a cloud. Nor did these depressing circumstances vanish at the appearance of the restored monarchy. Throughout Charles's reign the complaints continued; in 1663 a committee was appointed to inquire into 'the reasons for the generall Decaye of Trade',¹ and a similar commission was chosen in 1669 to consider the 'causes and grounds of the fall and decay of trade'.² At later stages stagnation was general, and there were many periods of temporary or more lasting languor.

The causes of these depressions are easily discovered. In the first place it took time to recover from the exhaustion of the previous thirty years. Secondly, the intense commercial enmity of the Dutch expressed itself in naval warfare, and during these wars (1665-7 and 1672-4) the Dutch harried the English

¹ *D. S. P., Chas. II, xciv. 53.*

² *Hist. MSS. Comm., viii. 133-4.*

hung about the river mouths, and pounced upon such wind and cloth fleets as dared to venture on the North Sea. Further, even if no actual war was in progress, the Dutch did their utmost to exclude finished English cloths from their ports, and to take from England only raw materials or semi-manufactured cloths. They were still superior to the English dyers and finishers, and thousands of Dutchmen still found employment by dressing the cloths which were imported, white and undressed, from England. This arrangement had been entered by the Merchant Adventurers, who still exported annually large quantities of such pieces to the Low Countries. When the monopoly of the Adventurers broke down, private factors and middlemen carried on the trade. Joseph Holroyd, of Soythall, near Halifax, of whom more will be said later, was such a man. His letter books show him, during the years 1706-7, to be engaged in making large purchases of white kerseys on behalf of Dutch finishers and merchants. Also, especially after the Restoration, Dutch agents settled in the manufacturing towns, where they bought and shipped new and old draperies, and washed, to their native land. Such men were to be found in Leeds and the West Riding, and one man, Kyte by name, a Dutchman living in Halifax, was in 1665 dispatching via Hull and Newcastle thirty or forty packs of white kerseys each week.¹ Many of these cloths were then exported from Holland by Dutch merchants to Turkey and elsewhere in competition with the wares of English merchants.²

The third and greatest cause of this halting progress lay in the very keen competition to which English traders were subjected in foreign markets. The mercantilist policy which was being pursued by most European countries aimed at building up strong industries, and the attainment of self-sufficiency in the supply of cloth as in most other branches of economic life. France and Holland did not want English cloths; they intended to make their own. But to do so they must have wool and fuller's earth. Of these raw materials they had only a scanty native supply, and were therefore compelled to seek for such commodities in other lands. England was especially fortunate in possessing

¹ *D. S. P., Chas. II, cxi. 50 (1665)*

² *Report of Turkey Merchants, D. S. P., Chas. II, xcvi. 35 (1664)*

large supplies of those necessities of the textile trade, and English writers often boasted that, in their opinion, England held the world's supply of these precious substances. 'Wool is the flower and strength, the revenue and blood of England . . . and in the supply of wool and Fuller's Earth this nation is by God peculiarized in these blessings. . . . It is possible and probable that other parts of the World may produce Fuller's Earth, but neither in such fineness nor abundance as this in England';¹ so declared the author of *The Golden Fleece*. France and Holland were fully aware of the high quality of the English raw materials, and made great efforts, openly or surreptitiously, to obtain supplies. Wool was a popular commodity for smuggling to those countries, and, having obtained the desired supplies and placed heavy impositions upon English cloths, the French and Dutch were able to 'suck the sweetness of the Sinews of our Trade',² and develop their own textile industries. This growth of rivals, fed partly on English materials, caused constant controversy, much thought, and frequent legislation, and the Government spared no pains to prevent the growth of the industry in other countries at our expense. Further, when a continental country such as Prussia or Russia set out to initiate and build up a textile industry, it attempted to induce Englishmen to go over and instruct the natives in the art of cloth making. We hear repeatedly of 'divers Workmen transported . . . together with ye said comodities [i. e. wool, &c.], to the end and intent to sett up the Manufacture of Clothing in other countries'.³ In 1738 a writer instances the case of a Mr. John Hudson of Yorkshire, who went out to Altona and began to make cloth there in 1732, 'and now [1738] there is at that place above 100 looms, and those that are gone over lately are to set up the making of stuffs and stockings and narrow goods, and have carried their engines and other utensils along with them, . . . and severall broad looms to make calimancoes, camblets and divers other stuffs'.⁴

The protectionist policy of Colbert dealt a hard blow at the North Country, for the cheap northern cloths had found one of

¹ *The Golden Fleece*, by W. S., Gentleman (1656), pp. 60-4.

² *England's Glory*, by a true lover of his Country (1666).

³ *D. S. P., Chas. II.*, xcvi, 20 (1663).

⁴ Pamphlet, *Observations on British Wooll and the Manufacture of it*, by a Northamptonshire manufacturer (1738), pp. 10-11.

their best markets in France. The French, however, had quickly acquired the art of making cheap wares, and in 1670 a writer from Lille declared that 'the French are now got into the way of making a low-price-sort of Cloath called "Searge de Berry" which comes as cheap as Northern Cloaths and of much better wool . . . in which they have cloathed a great number of their souldiers'.¹ Four years later another writer gives the following lamentable picture of the decline in the demand for northern fabrics:

'There have, about 12 or 14 yeares agoe, come from Kendal to this towne [London], 6 or 8,000 peeces a yeare, and not now 100 peeces; of Kearsseys from the West of Yorkshire 10,000 peeces a yeare, not now 500 to be shipped for france; from Lancashire severall thousand peeces of bayes formerly, and now scarce one; and all, from the excessive customes, discouraged and disabled to send to France.'²

Thus, from the Restoration to about the end of the century, the woollen industry experienced a period of stagnation, due to the expansion of the textile industries in those countries where English cloths had formerly found a substantial market. 'In divers foreign countries, France, Holland, Flanders, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Silesia, Luneberg, and other parts of Germany, new manufactures have been set up, which we take to be another reason why our trade in woollen has not been further enlarged.' In these words a commission reported to the House of Lords in 1702. Men of Yorkshire were of the same opinion; in 1703 the merchants and clothiers around Leeds declared that 'the Woollen Manufacture doth sensibly decline in severall branches, particularly in the vending thereof into fforaigne countreys', and the men of Halifax, with their usual personal frankness, asserted that 'upon the Woollen Manufactures and Trade depends in a great Measure the Wealth of your Maj^{ty's} Kingdome, the Imployment of the poor, and the Incouragment of Navigation, which Trade is greatly Decayed of Late in these Northerne partes'.³

This unsatisfactory condition of the industry attracted much

¹ *England's Interest by Trade Asserted*, by W. Carter (1671), who quotes the above extract.

² *D. S. P., Chas. II*, vol. 361, p. 171 (July 27, 1674).

³ Treasury Papers, lxxxiv, no. 15 (1703). A similar petition came from Akenhead.

attention from the Government, and persistent and varied attempts were made to infuse the cloth trade with vigour and new life. The first attempt was by means of a series of statutes which aimed at increasing the demand for woollen goods. The idea dated back to at least the reign of Henry III, when the Oxford Parliament decreed that every one 'should use woollen cloth made within the country'.¹ During the depressions of the reign of James I many people complained that the wearing of silks and foreign fabrics was displacing the good old English woollens, and clamoured for legislation to compel the wearing of English woollen cloths in preference to these fancy and foreign materials.² Others made a different suggestion which was now embodied in the statute of 1666. This act, 'for the encouragement of the Woollen Manufacture of the Kingdom', demanded that 'noe person . . . shall be buryed in any Shirt . . . or Sheete, made of or mingled with Flax, Hemp, Silk, Haire, Gold or Silver, or other than what shall be made of Wooll onely . . . or be putt into any Coffin lined or faced with anything made or mingled with Flax, Hemp, &c., upon paine of the forfeiture of the Summe of Five pounds, to be imployed to the use of the Poore of the Parish where such person shall be buryed'.³ This order neither produced the desired boom in trade nor materially enriched the poor of the parishes, for it seems to have been generally disregarded. In 1678, therefore, it was replaced by a much more formidable decree, which directed that a register should be kept in every parish by the incumbent or his substitute, in which some one must certify that everything about the corpse was made of sheep's wool only.⁴ This information was to be supplied in an affidavit made by the relations of the deceased, and lodged with the incumbent within eight days of the interment, under penalty of five pounds. The Act, reinforced in 1680,⁵ remained on the Statute Book until the nineteenth century. Entries in accordance with its clauses and instances of its infringement are occasionally encountered in the local parish registers, and generally run as follows:

1724. 'Mary Higgins, of Allerton, makes oath that May Mitchell, of the same place, was not wrapt . . . in any sheet . . .

¹ Ashley, *Economic History*, I. ii. 194.

² *D. S. P., Jas. I.* cxxxi. 55.

³ Statute 30 Chas. II, c. 3.

⁴ Statute 18-19 Chas. II, c. 4.

⁵ Statute 32 Chas. II, c. 1.

or shroud but that was made of sheep's wool only as by Act of Parliament decreed.'¹

Richmond Quarter Sessions, 1679. 'Fine of five pounds levied on the goods of Thomas Norton, late deceased and buried in the Bedale Parish Church, no certificate having been made to the Rector of Bedale within eight days of the buriall that the said Thomas was buried in wool according to the Statute.'²

These statutes were far from being dead letters, but it seems probable that here, as in all legislation which relied for its effectiveness on the vigilance of local administrators, there was every degree of laxity and rigour, according to the character and the temper of the local clergy. Again, the poorer classes, to whom woollens were the everyday cloths at hand, would have little inclination to brave the law by using linen and cotton fabrics; the wealthier neighbour was willing to take the risk, as was Thoresby in the case of his father, who died in October 1679.³ Hence Macpherson, writing at the end of the eighteenth century, complains that 'such is the vanity of the rich and great that they continue to pay the penalty rather than not adorn the deceased with fine linen, lace, &c., though this is so contrary to our true and national interest'.⁴

Legislation with a similar aim strove to forbid the growth of the manufacture of calico,⁵ cotton, and similar upstart fabrics, under the belief that any development of such new industries could be made only at the expense of the older manufacture.

The second method adopted to foster the woollen industry comprised new determined efforts to improve the quality of the wools. But, as we have seen already, the corporations and companies which were instituted for this purpose by the Stuarts failed dismally, and in the eighteenth century therefore the State was compelled to fall back on direct legislation, administered through the justices of the peace and their officials. With these somewhat elaborate efforts we shall deal in a subsequent chapter.

Thornton Register, June 1724.

North Riding Quarter Sessions Records, vii. 18.

Atkinson, *Ralph Thoresby, his Town and Times*, vol. i, p. 72. Also Leeds

Church Register, November 1, 1679.

Macpherson, *op. cit.*, ii. 592. In the registers mention is made as follows:

'Linen and certificate given'

Calico Acts, 7 Geo. I, c. 7; and 9 Geo. II, c. 4.

The third method was an attempt to prevent France and Holland from obtaining their supplies of raw materials from this country. The exportation of wool and fuller's earth was stringently forbidden, and repeated attempts were made to suppress the illicit traffic, which, however, continued in spite of legislative efforts. The story of these fruitless exertions is of considerable importance in its bearing on the Yorkshire wool supply, and so a fuller consideration of the topic must be postponed until we deal with the manner in which the eighteenth-century clothiers obtained their raw material. But we must note here, in passing, that the State also attempted to forbid the exportation of technical skill. In 1718 a statute was passed denouncing the compacts which were being made between foreigners and Englishmen, and laying down penalties against those who enticed workmen, and those workmen who consented, to go abroad to set up English industries in the land of the enemy.¹ This Act failed to check the emigration of artisans, though occasionally the law did seize upon some suspected person, as for instance in October 1727. At the Leeds General Sessions of that year John Windsor and William Simpson, cloth-dressers, were accused of having 'promised and contracted to leave the realm of Great Britain and go to Spain, there to exercise their art and to teach the mystery of cloth-dressing to the subjects of the King of Spain'. The prosecution, however, broke down, and the men were acquitted.

Thus over the broad field of English economic life the outlook was often gloomy, and it might even seem possible that in the struggle between the great commercial empires England would come out defeated. Why should not France or Holland secure the mastery of the industrial and commercial world, and become the workshop and the carrying agent for mankind? Nay more, would England ever emerge from the cloud under which she lay in those later decades of the Stuart period?

The answer to these questions is to be found largely in the general history of the next century, and also in the development of certain factors which had begun to exert their influence before

¹ Statute 5 Geo. I, c. 27; renewed and strengthened by Geo. II, c. 23 (1728). The penalties inflicted by these Acts were very severe. For the first offence £200 and twelve months' imprisonment; for the second £2000 and two years in prison.

Revolution of 1688. First amongst these was the building up of our commercial and colonial empire, the foundations of which had been well and truly laid during the seventeenth century. India, North America, and other territorial acquisitions opened up new sources of raw material or provided new markets, and a brisk trade in cloth soon developed between Yorkshire and the North American colonies.¹ At the same time the European market was extended by the Methuen Treaty of 1703, which opened Portugal still further to English cloth dealers, and by the relations of William of Orange and the Hanoverian kings with the Continent. As the English gained greater mastery over the sea the complaints of pirates and of the dangers of the ocean highways became less frequent, and merchants could make their journeys in peace and security.

Secondly, the whole standard of economic activity was raised by the various steps which were taken during the last decade of the seventeenth century. The founding of the Bank of England, the institution of the National Debt, the restoration of the currency, and the developments in credit, paper money, marine insurance, all helped British commerce to feel its way towards a state of greater efficiency and more complex organization. The commercial class was growing in wealth and importance, and although the old pioneer companies had lost their former influence, newer associations, such as the East India Company, had acquired great power, political and economic, over the regions in which they traded. The mercantile and financial magnates found their way into parliament,² took an air of respectability, and even attained the greatest social heights by marriages with the nobility of the realm. Defoe marvels at that new product, the gentleman merchant, and declares that 'Trade is so far from being inconsistent with a gentleman that in England trade makes a gentleman, for after one generation or two, the tradesman's children come to be as good gentlemen, statesmen, parliament-men, judges, bishops and noblemen as those of the highest birth and most ancient families'.³ The nobility as yet showed little general interest

¹ *D. S. P.*, Chas. II, vol. 362, p. 47.

² *See, Trade and Navigation of England considered* (1739), 1.

³ *Defoe, Complete Tradesman*, p. 246. See also Gibbins, *Industry in England*.

in commerce, probably because the 'youth of liberal education, never reading anything of manufacture, &c., in Homer or Virgil, or their college notes, . . . are either generally silent in this matter, or speak of it with contempt; . . . thus they are accurate in Logic and Philosophy, which do not add twopence per year to the riches of the nation. . . . whilst the notions of trade are turned into ridicule, or much out of fashion'.¹ A more probable explanation was that the more spirited landed proprietors devoted their enthusiasm and energy to agricultural pursuits, and were in the van of agricultural improvement. Arthur Young is full of praise for the splendid work done by the landed gentry; Townshend left politics for turnips; Walpole was intended by his father to be the first grazier in the country, but preferred the political field.² In the north the nobility were giving much assistance, pecuniary and otherwise, to commercial enterprises and to the improvement of the means of communication. The Earl of Thanet, on April 16, 1692, 'spent in a journey to Yorke, to discourse with Mr. Thompson about the linen manufacture . . . o. 13. 10.', and Viscount Irwin provided the Cloth Hall at Halifax, and gave assistance in the erection of the first White Cloth Hall in Leeds in 1711. The turnpike and canal ventures were generally sure of the favour of the neighbouring gentry and nobility, and greater facilities for the purchase of land for roads and canals were extended by them than the smaller holders.

The mention of the means of communication brings us to the third important influence in the economic progress of the eighteenth century. Capital began to be called into greater use, though not to any great extent for purposes of production. Vast sums of money were, however, laid out in the very necessary task of improving the means of transit throughout the country. The few spare pounds of the clothier and yeoman farmer, or the larger sums of the landed gentry, were pooled together to make a turnpike road, to render a river navigable, or to construct a canal. For this work the geographical features of the country were very favourable. There were no outstanding difficulties to be overcome in the form of vast deserts, lofty mountain ranges, or great distances. The carrying of a canal over the

¹ *British Language*, c. 1710, p. 11. See also Smith's *Memorabilia*, vol. 1, p. 11. ² Morley, *History of England*, p. 112.

Pennine Chain was about the only great obstacle to be faced, and thus the improvement in the means of communication was carried out with comparative ease. By the end of the eighteenth century the network of roads and waterways, though far from complete, enabled transport to be carried on with infinitely greater celerity than had been the case in the days when Chesby recorded his travelling experiences during the early part of the century. When one remembers that the wool had to travel many miles in going through the various processes of manufacture, and considers the extremely unkempt state of the roads prior to the revolution in the means of transit, it is amazing that an industry so widely scattered as the woollen manufacture should make any progress whatever. Certainly improvements could be more welcome to the clothier than the formation of the highways. From the time when he travelled from the wool-producing areas to the time when he deposited his cloth on the stall in the market he was constantly on the road, and hence the making of good highways was to him a veritable blessing.

Finally, the closing years of the seventeenth century and the first of the eighteenth century were marked by the rapid growth of two new branches of the textile industry in the north. Lancashire had formerly resembled Yorkshire in its textile activity, and had been famous for the production of various types of cloth, 'p. cloths', 'fries', 'cottons', fustians, &c. Now in the eighteenth century this manufacture of woollens was partially superseded by the production of cotton goods. Cotton was imported from the American colonies, and, thanks to the suitable climate, Lancashire made rapid progress in the manufacture of cotton fabrics, especially when released from legal disabilities. By the end of the eighteenth century cottons had displaced woollens in Lancashire, although the manufacture of certain types of woollen cloth lingered on in the Pennine districts and about Rochdale. Whilst Lancashire was transforming its industry, the woollen area of Yorkshire received new vigour from the institution of the worsted industry, which quickly found its congenial home in the West Riding, and therefore allowed Lancashire to develop along dual lines, as a woollen and also as a worsted manufacturing county.

These and other forces combined to make the eighteenth century one of progress and general prosperity. The peace of Walpole's régime, the internal order and security from invasion which this country enjoyed even in times of commercial warfare, were factors which allowed the new commercial and industrial developments to make headway. Old industries found fresh worlds to conquer, and new industries quickly assumed considerable dimensions. The home market expanded with the growth of population, whilst the figures of our foreign trade gradually mounted higher and higher. In 1662 the exports reached £2,022,812, a figure which was less than that of the year of depression 1622.¹ During the next ten years there was little improvement, but the following figures indicate the subsequent expansion :

	Total Exports.	Exports of Worsted and Woollen Cloth. ²
	£	£
1688 . . .	4,310,000	2,000,000 (circa)
1700 . . .	7,021,053	3,128,300
1720 . . .	6,910,800	2,900,000 (average 1718-24)
1730 . . .	8,548,982	3,600,734 (1741)
1750 . . .	12,000,081	4,200,762 (1751)
1760 . . .	14,604,970	4,344,978 (1761)

The second column gives the values of woollen and worsted exports. In the reign of Charles II these exports constituted two-thirds of the total exports in value, but during the following century, although there was an actual increase in the value of such exports, the increase was not proportionate to that of general exports. Woollen goods lost some of that predominance which they had held for so long.

When we turn from a consideration of the national field to that of Yorkshire, we find that progress here was very marked. True, the *national* woollen and worsted industry was not expanding at a very great pace, and the increase in the value of its exports between 1700 and 1760 was only about 30 per cent. But such a figure fails to express the growth which was taking place in Yorkshire, for in reality the West Riding was appropriating to itself a greater and greater share of the national industry, and was attracting the trade from other parts of the country. The worsted

¹ *House of Lords MSS.*, New Series, vol. V, pp. 69-70.

² Figures for 1700 from *House of Lords MSS.*, New Series, vol. V, pp. 70. Others from Macpherson, *op. cit.*, vols. II and III.

industry which grew up around Bradford was not a new national asset; it was an expansion made largely by outrivalling the East Anglian worsted manufacturer. Similarly, the increase in the output of ordinary woollen goods in Yorkshire was made at the expense of the woollen areas of Lancashire, the Midlands, East Anglia, and the West of England. Thus, though there might be no extraordinary increase in the national production of cloth, Yorkshire was developing very rapidly by appropriating to itself a larger proportion of the cloth manufacture of the nation, and was preparing for the still greater progress which the Industrial Revolution was to bring. For this assumption of supremacy the West Riding was peculiarly equipped, both before and after the advent of steam. The facilities which existed for the use of water had been of great value from the earliest times in influencing the settlement and progress of the industry in the valleys of West Yorkshire. The legion of spinning mills could never have existed but for the abundant supply of water. Now, in the eighteenth century, when water power was being utilized for grinding logwood and working machines of various kinds, even the most insignificant little mountain brook was of service, and the ubiquity of water was an invaluable natural asset to the industry. Then, when the Industrial Revolution came along, a giant of iron and coal, all the materials for the new machinery and for the power to drive that machinery were found near the existing seat of the industry. The West Riding had water power at hand so long as water power was needed; but when steam came to be the motive force, and iron the material of which machines were made, iron and coal were at the very door. Hence there was no necessity for an extensive migration, and the industry remained in its former place, though of course more concentrated in certain centres.

As already indicated, the outstanding feature of Yorkshire's textile development during the eighteenth century was the growth of the worsted manufacture. It is necessary, therefore, to turn our attention to this aspect of the story, and trace the growth of this new branch of the trade. First, however, let us make clear the general difference between worsteds and woollens, and note briefly the technical distinctions between the two types

of cloth. The following description is quite inapplicable to modern conditions, for the developments in textile knowledge, machinery, and procedure have entirely transformed the technique of the two industries, and effected a revolution in the possible uses to which the various kinds of wool can be put. Whatever, therefore, is said here must be regarded as referring only to the old hand days.

The wool fibre differs from hair and some other fibres in two respects. Firstly, it is waved and curly, and tends to twist round anything with which it comes in contact. Secondly, under the microscope, wool shows its edges to be covered with scales or serrations, somewhat like the edge of a saw, or like a fir-cone, if one could imagine such a cone with parallel edges. These serrations all point the same way, and hence whilst the wool is on the sheep's back, and the fibres all lie the same way, they have no opportunity of interlocking. But if the various fibres are placed across each other, or in any way thrown out of a parallel arrangement, interlocking takes place. Not merely do the wavy fibres curl round each other, but under pressure the serrations of one fibre hook on to those of neighbouring strands. This process is known as *felting*; by it the various threads lose their identity, and become mixed and entangled in a homogeneous mass of wool, the strength of which depends not merely upon that of each separate fibre, but also on the grip which the threads have taken upon each other in the matted texture. The process of felting is always accompanied by a shrinkage in the volume of the wool, popularly known as 'running up'.¹

Thanks to this felting property, wool can be made into cloth the strength of which comes not from the firmness of its warp and weft, but rather from the completeness with which the fibres comprising warp and weft become interlocked and entangled when submitted to the necessary treatment. As the felting is accompanied by shrinkage in dimensions, the resultant fabric is thicker, firmer, and stronger than when woven. It is no

¹ The details such as are here given can be obtained from any technological work on the textile industry. See especially McLaren, *Spinning Woollen and Worsted* (1884); E. Baines, paper on 'Woollen Manufactures of England', read before the British Association at Leeds, 1858; Clapham, *Woollen and Worsted Industries* (1907); Bean, *On the Wool Trade* (1913).

is not possible to distinguish the separate threads of warp and weft amidst the maze of interwoven fibres, and hence the cloth does not unravel at the edge or end. This type of cloth is known as *woollen*; it is comparatively rough in texture; little ends of the fibres protrude from the surface, and can be seized and pulled out with one's fingers or a pair of pincers.

On the other hand, cloth can be made which largely neglects the strength given by felting, but relies almost entirely on the strength of weft and warp. For certain kinds of cloth a smooth surface is required, approaching that obtained on silk and cotton goods. In order to achieve this effect, the cloth must be made of yarn which is firm, even, and smooth. Such yarn would by reason of its smoothness have no protruding fibres, and be unsuited for felting. It must therefore be strong enough to give the cloth firmness and durability without seeking the aid of felting. In short, if the yarn must be smooth, the cloth loses a great part of that strength which comes from interlocked fibrations, and this strength must be supplied by using a stronger yarn. Such cloth is known as *worsted*, and the navy blue serge extensively used for men's suitings to-day is an excellent type of the whole class. Smooth, firm, and even in texture, it has almost a glossy appearance in a bright light, and the gloss becomes more pronounced with wear. A piece of worsted unravels at the end, and the thread which comes out is seen to be quite firm and strong.

The essential difference between woollens and worsteds lies therefore in the character of the yarn used. For the woollen, the wavy and serrated properties of the fibres must be utilized to the utmost in making the fibres into yarn and in fitting the yarn for interlacing with neighbouring threads. For the worsted, the fibres must be made into a strong thread, whose felting activities are ignored or actually repressed. Before the Industrial Revolution, differences in the character of the yarn depended partly upon the character of the wool used and partly upon the processes through which the wool passed prior to spinning. Short-fibred wool was used for woollen yarn, long-fibred for worsted; the former was carded, the latter combed. Short-fibred wools were more curly than long, and therefore were more easily entangled. This cohesive faculty was accentuated

by carding, in which the fibres were converted into a maze by being worked between two boards covered with wire spikes. The fibres were crossed and doubled over each other in every possible direction, and the handful of wool was thus held together by the interlocking of the serrations and the curling of one fibre round another. When the carded wool was spun, the twist given increased the cohesiveness of the tangled material, whilst the loose ends of fibres which protruded offered further facilities for the rough yarn to interlace itself with adjacent weft and warp.

Whilst the aim of carding was to arrange the fibres in as confused a manner as possible, combing was intended to lay all the threads in the same direction. The long-fibred wool could more easily be kept straight than the short, and combing increased this straightness. Combing achieved two things. It extracted from amongst the long fibres any short ones which might be present, the latter by reason of their greater curl twisting round the teeth of the comb: at the same time it gave all the long fibres a similar parallel direction. There were now no crossed fibres, no fibres running contrary ways, and therefore scarcely any interlocking. The combed wool when spun therefore depended for its strength upon the natural firmness of the fibres, plus that given by twisting them altogether.

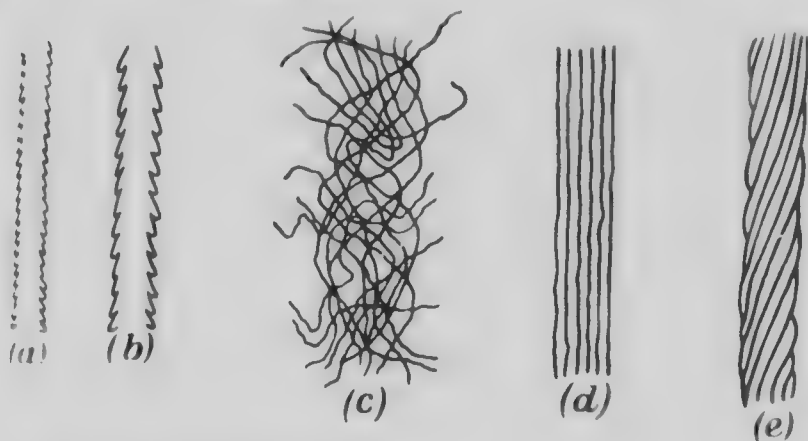
Perhaps the accompanying diagrams (see p. 263) will help to make the foregoing explanation more clear.

The difference in treatment of the material continued after weaving. With one or two exceptions, all woollen cloths were fulled, in which process the fibres of warp and weft, under pressure and moisture, interlocked still more thoroughly, giving a compact piece of material. Worsteds needed no such treatment.

The establishment of a worsted industry in Yorkshire therefore meant the introduction of one new process in the existing woollen industry, i. e. combing. From the account of the lawsuit of 1638 it appears that the long wools of Lincolnshire and

¹ Modern conditions in the woollen and worsted industries are very different from those described above. To-day, short wool can be combed, long wool is sometimes carded, and much worsted wool is carded before it is combed. Further, some worsteds are now milled in order to obtain greater firmness whilst some woollens are not milled. See McLaren, *op. cit.*, chap. iv.

Westershire were being used for the manufacture of kerseys, were presumably carded. All that was required was to give carders of that wool by combers—by no means an easy task. Combing required a considerable measure of skill, and the necessary body of skilled wool-combers could only be obtained gradually. Further, Yorkshire worsted cloths would have to meet the competition of similar fabrics from the traditional centres of the industry. How the West Riding confronted these difficulties we must now see.



Merino fibre, showing serrations.

Lincoln fibre, showing serrations.

Carded wool, showing entangled arrangement of fibres.

Combed wool, showing fibres lying parallel.

Worsted yarn, showing, in exaggerated form, the smoothness of surface.

The Rise of the Worsted Industry in the West Riding

The manufacture of worsteds in England dates back to at least the middle of the thirteenth century. Worsted cloths were exported from Boston in 1302,¹ and in 1315 formed a sufficiently important article of commerce to be placed on a list of commodities on which Hartlepool was allowed to claim port tolls.² In 1329 the manufacture of 'cloths of Worstede' was large enough to need regulations for the prevention of fraudulent reckmanship.³ The industry developed most rapidly in East

¹ See Lipson, *op. cit.*, chapter on the woollen industry, for early evidences;

² Salzmann, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

³ *Registrum Palatinum Dunelm.* (Rolls Series), iv. 124.

Ashley, *Economic History*, I. ii. 206.



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Anglia, and from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century Norfolk and the eastern counties were easily foremost in the worsted trade. Norwich was one of the largest, most wealthy, and handsome towns in the kingdom; 'an ancient, rich and populous city', said Defoe,¹ and Arthur Young described it as follows: 'In Norfolk we see a face of diligence spread over the whole country. The vast manufactures carried on chiefly by the Norwich weavers employ all the country around in spinning yarn for them, besides many thousand packs of yarn which they receive from other countries, even so far as Yorkshire and Westmorland.'² Norwich was, in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the 'Worstedopolis' which Bradford has since become. Its prosperity continued until about the sixties of the eighteenth century, when the competition of the north and the general adoption of new and lighter fashions began to bring about its decline.

Other centres and localities had risen into prominence during the centuries, and in 1700 Exeter was famous for its serges,³ Canterbury and Colchester made good 'says', Coventry was doing a large trade in 'tammies', and many smaller places were centres of some branch of the manufacture, thriving and populous.

When did the industry settle in the northern parts, and find a home in the West Riding? Briefly, the answer is that the making of worsteds was taken up in Yorkshire almost as soon as in East Anglia, but was apparently forsaken during the sixteenth century in favour of the staple kerseys and dozens. During the Stuart régime fitful attempts were made to re-establish the manufacture, but it was not until nearly 1700 that West Riding manufacturers seriously turned their attention to shalloons, says, and tammies. From that time onwards the industry progressed, though at first only slowly, and by 1770 was large enough to be a most formidable rival of East Anglia.

The coverlets or 'chalons' mentioned so frequently in the first chapter were worsted cloths. As we saw, their manufacture

¹ Defoe, *op. cit.*, 1763 edition, i. 59-64.

² Arthur Young, *Eastern Tour*, 1771, ii. 76.

³ Smith's *Memoirs of Wool*, i. 204. Defoe, *Tour*, 1727 edition, i. 323, points out that the serge market at Exeter was, next to the Leeds market, the largest cloth market in England.

was carried on in many parts of the county during the fourteenth century, and York had its gild of coverlet weavers by about 1400. But this branch of cloth-making never attracted any great amount of attention: possibly the difficulty of getting supplies of long-fibred wool impeded its progress. Hence, whilst woollens flourished, worsteds languished. The coverlet weavers of York in 1543 made their famous protest against the competition of the country weavers, and had their monopoly over the industry confirmed. But their own production was very small, whilst that of the country chaloners was probably reduced considerably by the Act of 1543. Thus we find from a document dated 1595 that at the end of the century the manufacture of coverlets or any other kind of worsted goods in the county was very small indeed. During the sixteenth century the varieties of worsteds, which came under the heading of 'New Draperies', had been increasing rapidly, especially after the influx of refugees into East Anglia during the Reformation period. These new draperies were not brought under the control of the ulnager until 1594, when the ulnage of new draperies was farmed out to Sir George Delves and William Fitzwilliam for twenty-one years.¹ The farmers at once set out to investigate the probable yield of their investment, and requested a certain Peck to draw up an account of the extent to which new draperies were being made in Yorkshire. Peck's report, or rather as it is endorsed, 'My Brother Peck's Certificate of New Draperies in the Countie of Yorke', is a most interesting and illuminating document.² It shows that only a very small quantity of such draperies was being produced in the county, and the figures which it contains indicate that the farmers of the ulnage could not expect to reap a fortune from the manufacturers of the West Riding. The chief articles of manufacture which came under the scope of Peck's inquiry were 'cushions', of which Bradford and Halifax together made less than 3,400 yearly, coverlets and carpets, of which York made a few, and knitted stockings, which were made in large quantities at Doncaster, Richmond, and throughout the North Riding. Of worsted cloths proper there is no mention, apart from the few coverlets,

¹ *Originalia Rolls*, 36 Eliz., part iii, July 13.

² *D. S. P., Eliz.*, cclii. 2.

and thus by 1600 that industry had almost disappeared from the West Riding. According to the Yorkshire wills of the sixteenth century, worsted fabrics were occasionally used for garments, but whether the cloth was made in the county or not there is no indication. The inventory of John Pawson, the Leeds clothier, dated 1576 (quoted in Chapter III), notes the possession of 'vij paire of woll combes', but all the cloths on his premises were woollens, not worsteds. During the subsequent years visitors to Bradford are equally silent concerning the existence of any worsted trade in the town or neighbourhood. A traveller in 1639 declared that Bradford was 'a towne that makes great store of Turkey cushions and carpetts',¹ articles which were 'new draperies', but which can scarcely be regarded as forerunners of the great industry which was subsequently to develop there. Thus, up to the end of the Commonwealth, the clothiers of the West Riding were still engaged almost solely in making the old staple cloths, kerseys, pennistones, broad cloths, and northern dozens.

Meanwhile the worsted industry was receiving the attention of certain other inhabitants of the county. We have already noticed the attempts made by the municipal authorities of York to establish the manufacture of 'Norwich stuffes', in order to find employment for their poor people. This seems to have been a popular idea with many Yorkshire Poor Law authorities, who hoped by the introduction of a new industry to solve the problem of pauperism. In 1652 the North Riding justices of the peace drew up a similar scheme for the House of Correction at Pickering.² The details of this scheme are interesting in the light which they throw on the position of the worsted industry in Yorkshire at that time. The plan was drawn up 'for setting persons to work on spinning and knitting woollen drapery in the House of Correction . . . and instructing them in the art of weaving such searges as are the most usual manufacture of the weavers of the Eastern counties'. The pupils were to be drawn from those who had been incarcerated in the House for wandering or idle loitering, and also such other persons as were able

¹ *Journal of John Aston*, 1639, Surtees Soc., vol. cxviii, p. 30. See also *Life of Marmaduke Rawdon*, Camden Soc. publications, vol. lxxxv, p. 121.

² Order Book of the J.P.s of the North Riding, April 1652, printed in *Hist MSS. Comm.* LX, 331.

and willing to work, provided they came between the ages of seven and sixty, and were 'not decrepitt'. The inmates were to be employed at the occupation for which the North Riding was noted, namely 'knittinge and spinninge both wollen and Jersey, and all woollen drapery, makin stockings of wollen and Jersey'. But at the same time, the House was to enlist the services of 'a sufficient able woolcomber, who shall likewise instruct others in the same faculty'. Further, whilst the comber initiated his disciples into one branch of the worsted manufacture, the master of the House was at the same time to 'settle and employe one lowme sufficiently and well wrought by a worsted weaver for Searges of the best sorts . . . such as are most usually manufactured in Norwig, Norfolke and Suffolke'. The home of punishment was to become also the training college for a new industry. The project achieved no lasting success, nor did the North Riding become the centre of a flourishing worsted manufacture. East Anglia still retained its virtual monopoly of the industry, and the most that Yorkshire could do was to prepare and spin yarn, which was then carried south to feed the looms of Norwich and the surrounding counties.

During the last four decades of the seventeenth century a gradual change came over the scene, as the industry once more began to find a home in the West Riding. How exactly this transformation took place one cannot say. James¹ suggests that the industry may have been imported direct from East Anglia by the settlement of southern merchants and manufacturers in a county where land and labour were cheaper, where there was freedom from regulations and restrictions such as existed in the Norwich area, as well as from the labour troubles

which frequently harassed East Anglian masters. Or it may have been that some enterprising inhabitants of the West Riding, finding the trade in woollens at a standstill, turned their attention from kerseys and broad cloths to serges and shalloons, and either forsook woollens entirely, or ran both manufactures together in double harness. Probably both these courses were adopted. Norfolk merchants and manufacturers had been putting out wool to be spun in Yorkshire, and had then taken the yarn back to East Anglia for further treatment. Why not

¹ James, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

transplant the whole of their industry to Yorkshire and have all the processes of combing, spinning, and weaving carried out by north country labour? At the same time, Yorkshire clothiers, yeomen farmers, and merchants began to turn their attention to the possibility of improving their outlook by a change in policy. The districts around Bradford and Halifax had suffered severely during the Civil War, and their trade in cheap cloth had been seriously injured by the various depressive influences which we have already noted. The foreign nations had begun to make their own cheap cloths, and were ceasing to purchase the wares of Yorkshire. There seemed little prospect of much future development in the manufacture of kerseys and other such low-priced fabrics. Very well; why not abandon the manufacture of such commodities, and turn to other branches of the trade in which other countries were still unoccupied; in short, why not manufacture worsted cloths, as did the men of Norwich?

This change occurred during the latter years of the seventeenth century and the first two or three decades of the eighteenth. All the earliest evidence concerning worsted workers clusters round this period. The first step seems to have been to make bays, cloths which were half wool, half worsted— the warp being of combed wool, the weft of carded. In 1688 the output of bays in Yorkshire was sufficiently great to justify the inclusion of this fabric in a short list of cloths on which subsidy and ulnage were paid.¹ Eighteen years later we find Joseph Holroyd,² a cloth factor who lived near Halifax, engaged in a large trade in bays. Holroyd made big purchases for London and foreign merchants, and his letters for the years 1706-7 show him to be buying heavily in all varieties of bays both for London and the Low Countries. Consignments of 40 pieces are quite common, and one invoice mentions the purchase of 250 such cloths for a big customer in Rotterdam. There is no evidence in the letters as to the manufacture of full worsteds, but from other sources we know that serges and shalloons were now being made in many parts. Watson, in his *History of Halifax* (1775) states that 'The Shalloon trade was introduced here about the

¹ *House of Lords MSS., Hist. MSS. Comm., xiv, pt. vi, p. 42*

² *Letter Books of J. Holroyd and S. Hill (Halifax, 1914), Intro., and letter 34*

beginning of the century'.¹ From an indenture of apprenticeship dated March 1, 1715, we learn that a certain James Haggas was bound apprentice with John Jackson of Halifax,² to learn the art of weaving shalloons, the type of worsted for which the Halifax district eventually became famous. Obviously, therefore, by 1715 there were men in the Halifax area busy at work as fully fledged masters of the craft. Similar evidence from other parts is abundant. A 'Searge Weaver' who resided in Marsh Lane, Leeds, was brought before the Leeds justices in 1705;³ wool-combers were numerous in the same town about 1710, and in 1721 Mr. Thomas Jackman, worsted comber, paid his five guineas and was admitted to the freedom of the Corporation of Leeds.⁴ In the Skipton parish register, wool-combers are mentioned in 1717, and the Keighley register records the death of a shalloon maker in 1724, and a woolcomb maker in 1725.⁵ Denholme and Haworth were now flourishing worsted centres; Keighley was regularly sending pieces of shalloon to London before 1725, and when Defoe came north, about the same year, he found the manufacture established in many parts, but especially around Halifax, where at every house he saw a 'tenter and on almost every tenter a piece of cloth, kersie or shalloon, which are the three articles of this countrie's labour'.⁶

From this time onwards the growth was rapid, though in some cases fitful and subject to strong opposition and keen discouragement. That at least was the experience of Sam Hill, a clothier in the Halifax district, who in 1737-8 turned his attention from kerseys to shalloons. A fragment of Hill's letter-book, covering only three weeks, is extant, and gives a vivid idea of the difficulties to be overcome. Hill apparently decided to develop a trade in shalloons, Bocking Bays and Exeter Long Ells, and so began to solicit the buyers of his kerseys to take a few worsteds as well. The response was far from satisfactory, and at first those who took Hill's shalloons and bays found it difficult to get rid of them. At times Hill grew weary at the non-success which

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 67-9.

² See Dawson, *Loose Leaves of Craven History*, p. 20.

³ *Leeds Sessions Records*, ii. 293.

⁴ *Leeds Corp. Records*, ii. 176. See also *Sessions Orders*, ii. 561 and 627.

⁵ Keighley and Holmes, *Keighley Past and Present*, p. 105.

⁶ Defoe's *Tour* (1727 edition), iii. 134-5.

attended his efforts. 'Am perfectly sick of the little or no hopes of the Shalloon Bussiness',¹ he writes to one customer, and to another he declares, 'Am much concerned to hear you have not any Trade for Shalloons pray you as soon as possible revive me with the Contrary'.² Hill struggled hard to gain greater skill and experience; he experimented with different varieties, wrote eager requests to his customers for information and advice, sent samples, and strove hard to imitate in quality and appearance the worsteds of Norwich and Exeter. Amid all his worries, Hill was buoyed up by his immense confidence—one almost wrote conceit. Witness the following extracts from his letters: 'I am studying to outdo all England with the sort Sam Hill [shalloons] if quality and price will do it . . . but must earnestly beg of you to lett them go for a small profit however till they be known.'³ 'I like to make [Shalloons and Long Ells] and fancy I shall in time doe It well.'⁴ 'I will send you the 6 pieces Shaloon which shall be such as never was sent to Leeds at that price.'⁵ 'The narrow Shaloons . . . are I think such goods as I may say are not to be out done in England by any Man, let Him be who He will (I don't value).'⁶ So Hill plodded on: the competition from the older fields of industry was terribly keen, but he was not daunted. In the darkest hour, when reports from his customers were very bad, he boldly declared, 'I think it now evident these Manufactories [Bocking Bays and Exeter Serges] will come in spite of fate into these northern Countrys'.⁷ A true prophecy, for within fifty years Yorkshire had usurped the position of supremacy and become the stronghold of the industry.

By 1750 the industry was widespread throughout the Riding, and shalloons, calimancoes, tammies, camlets, &c., were made so far east as Leeds and Wakefield. Of the industrial centres, Halifax⁸ was the most important in the output of worsteds. The greatness of the town was twofold; it was alike a worsted and woollen centre. The demands for cloth for the troops in the various wars of the eighteenth century were met by the

¹ *Letters Books, Holboyd and Hill*, no. 102.

² *Ibid.*, no. 135.

³ *Ibid.*, no. 130.

⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 112.

⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 133.

⁶ Halifax population, 1738, 5,500; 1775, 7,500.

⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 116.

⁸ *Ibid.*

supply of Halifax kerseys, i.e. woollens. The North Sea trade in these cloths grew to such an extent that Defoe noted a Halifax factor who traded by commission to the extent of £60,000 per annum in kerseys alone.¹ On the other hand the worsted trade was very considerable, and Defoe estimated that the parish of Halifax was producing 100,000 pieces of shalloons yearly.² Spain, Portugal, Italy, and the Levant were markets for Halifax wares, and a trade with Guinea was being developed in 'Says' of a strong blue shade. 'These last were packed in pieces of 12½ yards in length, wrapped in an oilcloth painted with negroes and elephants to captivate the natives.'³ To the busy market, or to the Cloth Hall erected by Viscount Irwin, was brought the produce of the parish itself, Keighley, Haworth, and Colne, and merchants from Leeds, or their factors, came and bought great quantities of white undressed cloths, which they exported to Holland and Hamburg.⁴ The position of Halifax was therefore that of a powerful centre for a widely scattered district, and it seemed quite possible that Halifax would forge ahead as the metropolis of the worsted industry. That it lost that supremacy to Bradford is a matter the causes of which we cannot stay to consider. It is one of the strange incidents in the history of the West Riding that a town which had been supreme in the woollen industry, and then in the worsted, should fall from that position as Halifax did with the coming of the Industrial Revolution.

Wakefield, which was the second most important worsted centre, enjoyed a period of great prosperity during the eighteenth century. It had long been engaged in the woollen industry, and now took to itself the manufacture of 'tammies', a thin worsted fabric, a glazed variety of which was used for window-blinds and curtains, with a considerable sale both at home and abroad.⁵ The opening of the Aire and Calder navigation in 1699⁶ and the following years brought enormous wealth and trade to the town, for the long wool of Lincolnshire and Leicestershire, the very heart's desire of the worsted maker, was now brought by boat

¹ Defoe, *op. cit.*, 1762 edition, iii. 139. Also Dodsley's *Road Book*, 1756.

Defoe, *op. cit.*, iii. 139.

Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, 1770 (1776 edition), iii. 362.

² *Halifax and its Gibbet Law*, by Wm. Bentley, 1708, p. 27.

Brit. Assoc. Handbook, Leeds, 1890, p. 144 n. Also James, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

See Chapter XI, section on communications.

up the Calder, to be sold in the busy market at Wakefield. Wool growers and dealers forwarded wool from all parts of England to the factors at Wakefield, who had then little difficulty in disposing of it over the vast industrial field situated to the west and north of that town. Wakefield therefore figured largely as an emporium for raw materials. In addition to this, it was also a growing market for cloths, and in the production of tammies it gradually stole from Coventry its monopoly of that fabric. In the Tammy Hall,¹ built in 1766, these worsted pieces changed hands, and the Hall became one of the most important centres of trade in the county. Further, Wakefield was becoming important as a 'dressing' and 'finishing' town²; undyed and unfinished goods were sent there for further treatment, before their final dispatch to London and the Continent. And, whilst an important textile centre, Wakefield had become a great corn market. Large supplies of corn were brought up the Calder, and many people declared that Wakefield was the 'greatest corn market in the North of England'. Such a town was naturally the abode of wool-factors, wool-staplers, merchants, dyers, corn-dealers, &c., in addition to the official class, which was already there in considerable numbers. Here were many warehouses for cloth, corn, and wool, and so far had the mammon of unrighteousness invaded the place that even the little chantry chapel on the bridge had succumbed, and 'had been converted into a warehouse which was let to an old cloath's man, who used it as a warehouse for goods'.³ The general appearance of the town seems to have been very pleasing to the various travellers who have left on record their impressions. 'A town exceedingly populous, upon account of the great number of hands it employs in the woollen manufacture'⁴; 'an opulent and handsome town'⁵; 'one of the most wealthy and genteel of the clothing towns of Yorkshire'⁶; 'the handsomest of the trading towns in the West Kiding'⁷—such were the verdicts of four tourists, and the fame of this town, with its clean but narrow streets, its

¹ James, *History of the Worsted Manufacture*, p. 265.

² Arthur Young, *Northern Tour*, i. 151.

³ DeLoe, *op. cit.*, iii. 112.

⁴ Oxford's Journey, *Portland MSS.*, vi. 142.

⁵ Housman, *Topographical Description . . . of the West Riding* (1800), p. 183.

⁶ Edmund Dayes, *Works* (1805 edition), p. 35.

⁷ *England Described*, by Aikin (1818), p. 61.

gent houses, its pleasant buildings, cheap food, and abundance of social life, still kept for it the title of 'Merrie Wakefield'.

Of Bradford it is difficult to gather much. We have already noted its depopulation and the decay of the small woollen trade which had flourished there, and there can be no doubt that the fortunes of Bradford had sunk to a very low ebb. Whenever petitions were forwarded to Parliament concerning the woollen trade, Halifax, Wakefield, Leeds, and Huddersfield made their voices heard, but never Bradford. Only very slowly did the worsted manufacture establish itself there; hence Defoe, who knew Yorkshire very well, treated the town in a most cursory manner, declaring that it had become a market town, but was 'of no other note than having been the birthplace of Dr. Sharp, the good Archbishop of York'.² In 1752 it began the construction of the canal which joined it to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal; in 1773 it obtained a Piece Hall, and in the nineties one or two mills were erected there. Its expansion had been considerable between 1740 and the end of the century, but it was still only a small town, with a population in 1780 of about 4,200.³ Even in 1818 Dr. Aikin, in his *England Described*, devoted only seven lines to Bradford as against thirty to Halifax. Its reputation was bad, if we can gather anything from the frequent legislation against frauds committed by workers in worsted, or from the following somewhat damaging verse in an eighteenth-century Methodist hymn:⁴

On Bradford likewise look Thou down
Where Satan keeps his seat.

This insignificance of Bradford is partly to be accounted for by the fact that the industry grew up scattered over the whole of the district round about, and was not concentrated in the town itself. Again, Leeds and Wakefield were of considerable size, either because they were the abodes of merchants, middle-

² In a letter printed in *Old Yorkshire*, i. 13, and dated 1766, it is stated that the Calder was so clear at Wakefield that salmon were to be seen leaping the mill-stakes at Kirkgate.

Defoe, *op. cit.*, 1762 edition, iii. 145. Also 1748 edition, iii. 147.

³ This figure is quoted and accepted by all Bradford local historians, e.g. W. Turner, *Bradford Antiquary* (1884), i. 135.

⁴ Verse 38 of a hymn with 104 verses, 'The progress of the Gospel in Yorkshire and other parts', 1751, by Wm. Darney.

men, &c., or because they were finishing centres. Thus their population was either largely concerned with marketing transactions, inns, and offices, or consisted of men engaged in the dyeing, dressing, shearing, and other finishing processes. Now Bradford was, until the latter part of the century, only a small market, and not a finishing centre. The goods were bought there 'in the white'¹ by Leeds merchants, and then taken down to Leeds to be finished before export.² It was not until the last years of the eighteenth century, and the advent of steam power and machinery, that Bradford really began to make rapid progress. In the adoption and improvement of machinery, and in the manufacture of new types of wares, men of Bradford showed great enterprise, and enabled the town to outstrip Halifax. Further, the linking up of Bradford with the Leeds and Liverpool Canal gave to the town greatly improved means of communication. This ease of access was further developed to Bradford's advantage when the railway, especially the Midland Railway, brought Bradford almost on to the main line, whilst Halifax remained more or less isolated. Halifax was then left wide of the main arteries of traffic, its importance diminished, and Bradford rapidly assumed the position of metropolis of the new industry.³

Even Leeds, stalwart heart of the woollen body, was partly captured by worsteds. Arthur Young in 1770⁴ noted that in addition to broad cloths there were 'some shalloons and many other stuffs, particularly Scotch camblets, grograms, and calimancoes, etc.', manufactured in and around Leeds. The 'camblet' was the chief of these, and consisted of a rough, thick, worsted material, which was considered especially valuable for resisting rain, and was therefore used to a great extent in the making of cloaks and wraps for those who were travelling by coach; it also formed the customary dress material of the poorer classes of women.⁵ The substitution of lighter cloths, the adop-

¹ i.e. undyed and unfinished

² This was the case until well into the nineteenth century. About 1840 Bradford goods began to be finished on the spot.

³ Population of Bradford (town): 1780, 4,200; 1801, 6,393; 1831, 23,233; 1851, 52,501.

⁴ Arthur Young, *op. cit.*, i. 152.

⁵ *Reminiscences of an Octogenarian*, by Henry Hall, of the firm of Clapham and Hall; printed in James, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

tion of the macintosh, and the growth of the railroad rendered the camelot unfashionable, and Leeds remained true to its first love, the woollen.

With these and other towns as its strongholds, the worsted industry grew steadily throughout the century. It had its years of bad trade and of good,¹ it lost old markets and gained new ones.² It gradually won from the more southerly manufacturers the monopoly or predominance which they had formerly enjoyed. The tammies of Wakefield replaced those of Coventry, the serges of Exeter fought in vain against the growing popularity of Halifax and Bradford wares, and East Anglia, far from claiming the yarn of Yorkshire spinners for its looms, was soon content to send north some of the yarn spun in its own homes.³ From Arthur Young⁴ and from the Report of a Parliamentary Committee in 1774⁵ we can gather the relative position of east and north about 1770. Eighteenth century statistics can seldom be taken as accurate; they are often little more than estimates based on a few facts and a host of suppositions. Still if we do not treat them as being perfectly accurate, the general position can be ascertained.

Output of WORSTEDS for WEST RIDING in 1772=£1,404,000
(committee's figures).

Output of WORSTEDS for NORWICH area in 1770=£1,200,000
(Arthur Young).

Thus the West Riding produce at least equalled that of Norwich by 1770. Again, James and others estimated that about 80,000 persons were employed in the industry of the West Riding. Young gives the corresponding figure for Norwich as 72,000,⁶ and thus in terms of employees, as well as in quantity of output, Yorkshire had won a high position even before the great changes came to accelerate its progress.

1764-80 had many years of bad trade. Agitations, disorders, charitable sales, &c., figure in the records of the times. See Newspapers, Mayhall's *Annals*, vol. i, and Arthur Young. 1783-93 comprised the hey-day of Yorkshire's industrial prosperity in the eighteenth century.

The Napoleonic Wars made trade with Western Europe unsafe. Still in 1793 Halifax was exporting thousands of pieces of shalloons to the Levant and Turkey (*Brit. Dir.*, 1793, iii. 320).

James, *op. cit.*, p. 307. Also Arthur Young, *Eastern Tour*, ii. 76. Young says that the great day of Norwich was 1749-60.

Arthur Young, *Eastern Tour*, ii. 76 et seq.

This report is printed in both James, pp. 280-4, and Bischoff, *Wool, Flax, and Sheep*, i. 186-90.

⁶ Arthur Young, *Eastern Tour*, ii. 76.

There was considerable intercourse between the northern worsted area and that of East Anglia during the century. Partnerships were occasionally formed between Yorkshiremen and inhabitants of Norfolk, as for instance, 'the co-partnership between Mr. John Hodgson of Leeds, woolstapler, and Messrs. Joseph Ames and John Koe of Norwich', which was dissolved in 1757.¹ Also in matters of general interest to the trade the two districts worked in unison, joining in petitions to Parliament whenever their prospects were in danger, and after the formation of the Worsted Committees in Yorkshire and East Anglia these two committees kept in constant correspondence until the demise of the Norfolk industry.

Progress of the Woollen Industry during the Eighteenth Century

Meanwhile the woollen industry had been pursuing a similar career, though its progress was perhaps more slow and fitful. The home demand was proportionately reduced by the adoption of worsteds and cottons, and Sam Hill in 1737 declared that 'the encrease of the Bocking Bayse making I doe really believe causes one third fewer kerseys to be made'.² The foreign market was subject to all the vicissitudes of eighteenth century wars and enmities. The series of commercial wars, chiefly with France, placed foreign trade in a position of unstable equilibrium. First one section and then another of the foreign market was closed to English wares, whilst the growth of textile industries abroad and the smuggling of wool helped to cause acute depressions at various stages in the century. In 1742, for instance, the Leeds Corporation was bewailing the fact that 'trade and manufactures are every day declining', and attributed it to the illicit exportation of wool.³ Nine years later, the merchants and clothiers of Leeds asked Parliament to approach the Austrian Government with a view to removing the recent heavy duties, which were said to have closed the Low Countries to Yorkshire cloths.⁴ In 1756 the same petitioners complained of the recent decrees of the Regent of Hanover that all Hanoverian troops, who had formerly been clad in Yorkshire cloth, should hereafter

¹ *Leeds Intelligencer*, August 9, 1757.

² *Letter Books*, no. 124.

³ Wardell, *Municipal History of Leeds*, p. 74.

⁴ Add. MSS., 15873, f. 70, November 19, 1751.

near Hanoverian fabrics only.¹ The growth of clothmaking in the German States was a constant source of uneasiness to English dealers, who were afraid that one of their best markets would slip from their grasp.² The Yorkshire cloths were especially suited for military garments, and had enjoyed the favour of many European Governments until the rise of the native industries dispensed with the need for the imported article. The policy of Peter the Great had definitely aimed at the cultivation of a textile industry in Russia,³ in order to supply the requirements of his armies. Hence the Yorkshire clothiers had to fight hard to maintain a hold on the European markets, and their trade with the Continent was subject to all manner of vicissitudes.

Yorkshire had also built up a considerable trade with North America, and hence the war with the colonies brought about a temporary slump in the sale of woollens. The years 1771-3 had been gloomy, with bad harvests, dear food, and depression in trade. Then came the American War, which closed a valuable market against the clothiers and merchants. The extent of the consequent depression is seen in an interesting letter written by John Wesley, dated August 23, 1775:

"I aver that in every part of England where I have been (and I have been east, west, north, and south within these two years) trade in general is exceedingly decayed, and thousands of people are quite unemployed. Some I know to have perished for want of bread; others I have seen walking up and down like shadows. I have seen three or four manufacturing towns which have suffered less than others. Even where I was last, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, a tenant of Lord Dartmouth was telling me "Sir, our tradesmen are breaking all around me, so that I know not what the end will be." Even in Leeds I had appointed to dine at a merchant's, but before I came the bailiffs were in possession of the house. Upon my saying "I thought Mr. . . . had been in good circumstances", I was answered "He was so, but the American War has ruined him."'⁴

¹ Add. MSS. 32863, ff. 259-60, March 1756.

² Home Office Papers, November 16, 1764.

³ Clive Day, *A History of Commerce*, chaps. 27 and 44. Also 1806 Report, p. 173.

⁴ *Dartmouth MSS., Hist. MSS. Comm., Report 15, app. i, vol. iii, p. 220. Also Parl. Rep., 1806, iii. 163, speaks of depression in latter years of American War. In 1774 a Parliamentary Committee made inquiry into the depression in the county. It found trade depressed, wages down, and the Poor Law*

Foreign trade in the eighteenth century was no easy highway to success; and yet in spite of all these obstacles the Yorkshire woollen trade made magnificent headway, progress which seems almost incredible in the light of the difficulties outlined above, but as to the reality of which there can be no possible doubt. The proof is of a reliable official character. In 1725¹ Parliament ordered the examination and registration of all the broad cloths manufactured in the West Riding. In 1738² the same regulation was extended to narrow cloths, whilst after 1768 the length of each piece was also noted, as the cloths were being made of various lengths. The registers were added up annually, a report was presented to the Quarter Sessions at Pontefract, and then made public. The figures were common property, and were well known to all writers of the period. Arthur Young quotes them to 1770,³ and the local directories of Leeds bring them up to 1800 and even beyond. The statistics present 'an Account of the Number of [Broad or Narrow] Cloths Milled at the several Fulling Mills in the West Riding of the County of York'.

Broad Cloths.			Narrow Cloths.	
No. of Pieces.	Yards.	Year.	No. of Pieces.	Yards.
28,990		1727		
31,579½		1730		
31,744½		1735		
41,441		1740	58,620	
50,453		1745	63,423	
60,477½		1750	78,115	
57,125		1755	76,295	
49,362½		1760	69,573	
54,660		1765	77,419	
93,075	2,717,105	1770	85,376	2,255,625
95,878	2,841,213	1775	96,794	2,441,007
110,942	3,427,150	1779	93,143	2,650,650
157,275	4,844,855	1785	116,036	3,400,278
172,588	5,151,677	1790	140,407	4,582,122
250,903	7,759,907	1795	155,087	5,172,511
285,851	9,263,966	1800	169,262	6,014,420

This table is for woollens only; it takes no account whatever of worsteds, and it does not even include all kinds of woollens.

bill mounting rapidly. Extensive charity attempted to cope with the distress, but the general unrest and suffering expressed itself in numerous riots, outrages, and violent robberies. For this, see Report in James, *op. cit.*, 280-4, and Bischoff, *op. cit.*, i. 186-90. Also Mayhall, *Annals of Yorkshire*, i. 153 and 180.

¹ 11 Geo. I, c. 24.

² 11 Geo. II, c. 28.

³ See Arthur Young, *Farmer's Tour*, i. 404. Also Bischoff, *op. cit.*, app. iv. A complete copy of the table from 1720 to 1819 is in the possession of the present writer.

Certain woollen cloths such as 'bearskins, tailonets, swans-downs, and kerseymeres' are not included in the above figures.¹ Hence the statistics are not quite exhaustive even for the woollen industry, but they embrace the great staple kinds of cloth, and furnish a reliable indication as to the progress of the industry. From them we trace a growth both in the number of pieces and in the length of cloth produced. The output of broad cloths in 1770 is nearly three and a half times that of 1727. In 1785 it is almost six times the 1727 production. Similarly, the number of narrow cloths milled in 1785 is more than double that of 1740, whilst in both broad and narrow cloths the output in 1800 is about three times that of 1770. The importation of foreign wool had begun some time prior to 1770; wool-staplers scoured the southern countries to find supplies, and brought large quantities into Yorkshire. The improvements in the breeding of sheep helped to swell the supply of raw material, and Adam Smith declared that 'the wool of the Southern Counties of Scotland [was], a great part of it, after a long land passage through very bad roads, manufactured in Yorkshire'.² The cloths of Leeds were supplanting the wares of the South and West of England, and various travellers and observers writing between 1790 and 1818 remark on the effects of northern competition on the southern textile areas. Dr. Aikin, writing in 1809, states that the textile industry in Gloucestershire is 'somewhat on the decline. Its cloth has been successfully rivalled in Yorkshire'³; that of Somerset is 'somewhat declined on account of the rivalry of Yorkshire and other places'.⁴ The manufacture of superfine cloths in Wiltshire is 'less affected by the rivalry of Yorkshire than the other branches of the woollen manufactory'.⁵ In Dorsetshire 'on the whole, the clothing manufacturers have greatly declined from their former importance, and have for the most part, migrated into other counties'.⁶ Turning to East Anglia, the trade of Norwich has declined somewhat by reason of the competition of the cotton industry⁷; that of Bocking⁸ and other adjacent towns

¹ *Leeds Guide* (1806), p. 110, or *A Walk thro. Leeds* (1806), p. 17.

² Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, ii, chap. v, pp. 281-2 (Routledge ed., 1937).

³ Aikin, *England Delimited* (1809), p. 144.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁸ *Ibid.* (1818 edition), p. 252. The 1818 edition is called *England Described*.

'has much decreased within these sixty or seventy years', and that of Suffolk has 'for many years been on the decline'.¹ Thus with one or two exceptions the whole of the eastern and south-western clothing centres were by 1809 feeling keenly the 'rivalship' of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and as machinery and steam were more widely adopted the supremacy of the north became absolute. Across the English Channel, the weavers of France were experiencing the same effects of keen competition from the West Riding. Arthur Young in his *Travels in France* pointed out that the fabrics of Elbœuf and Vire were unable to hold their place against the cloths of Leeds called 'Bristols'.² Leeds was expanding rapidly; if we take vital statistics as a general guide, the population doubled between 1666 and 1731,³ and again doubled between 1760 and 1801.⁴ As a finishing centre, and as a market for cloth, its prosperity advanced by leaps and bounds. There was an abundance of money available for building cloth halls, chapels, a theatre, a library, &c.,⁵ and the increase in population called for so many new houses that in 1876 400 dwellings were in course of erection. The conclusion of the American War reopened the American market, and the merchants of Leeds poured their goods into the new republic. When the struggle with France began, Yorkshire was flooded with orders from every part of Europe for fabrics for the clothing of troops; a Wakefield master in 1825 declared that he had been employing 400 hands for the last twenty years making broad cloths for the army,⁶ and in 1797 Mr. Sheepshanks of Leeds was supplying scarlet and white cloth for the militia to the extent of £1,400 a year.⁷

The latter half of the eighteenth century was indeed a period of phenomenal progress. If we take our stand in 1770, we see the sister industries thriving to an extent which augured well

¹ Aikin, *op. cit.* (1818 edition), p. 237.

² Extracts from pamphlet, 'Observations sur le traité de commerce entre la France et l'Angleterre' (1786), quoted in Arthur Young, *Travels in France*, 1794 edition, i. 525.

³ Whitaker, *History of Leeds*, i. 25.

⁴ *Leeds Guide*, 1806, p. 121.

⁵ *Brit. Dir.*, 1790, iii. 533. From 1765 to 1800 Leeds revelled in the erection of chapels, churches, &c. The General Infirmary was opened, 1771. A theatre in Hunslet Lane, 1771; a Methodist Chapel in St. Peter's Square, 1771; a Quakers' Meeting House, 1788; Salem Chapel, 1791; and many others about the same time.

⁶ *Reports*, 1825, iv. 631.

⁷ Add. MSS. 35670, f. 146 et seq.

for their future prosperity. The estimates of the committee of 1774 throw much light on the extent of the industries, their relative size, and their national importance. The following figures are given for the Yorkshire industry :

		£
Annual amount of manufacture of woollens	.	1,860,700
" " " worsteds	.	1,404,000
Total	.	3,273,700
Of this, exports of woollens	.	1,248,740
" " " worsted	.	1,123,200
Total exports	.	2,371,940

Thus the worsteds almost equalled in value the output of woollens. Further, the total textile exports (including cottons, silks, &c.) for the whole country amounted to £4,436,783 in 1772; of this the above figures enable us to claim that at least £2,300,000 came from Yorkshire, or, in other words, more than half the entire export trade in fabrics.

In conclusion, therefore, the West Riding had reached a position of pre-eminence even before the great inventions came into operation. The supply of wool, the possibilities of water power, the possession of a population which could not produce by tillage of the bleak slopes all that was necessary for sustenance, and which, by the inherited skill of generations, was especially suited for industrial work, these were the chief forces which carried the county along the highway of progress, and prepared the road for the gigantic developments which lay before her when the wits of men revealed new sources of power, and discovered untold mineral wealth at her very door.

No more the rugged North with tyrant might
Shall shivering poverty evade to fight.

So wrote Maude in 1782.¹ He saw clearly the future of wealth before the 'rugged North', but little did he perceive that 'shivering poverty' would still retain its stronghold a century and a quarter after his words were penned.

¹ Maude, *Verbeia of Wharfedale*, p. 22 (York, 1782).

CHAPTER IX

THE DISTRIBUTION AND ORGANIZATION OF THE CLOTH INDUSTRY DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE remaining chapters of this book will be devoted to a survey of industrial life in the textile area of Yorkshire just prior to the Industrial Revolution. They will endeavour to indicate the geographical distribution of the industry, the main features of its organization, and the general processes by which cloth was made. The methods of marketing will be discussed, and finally we shall study the efforts which were made during the eighteenth century to regulate industrial activity and to inculcate honesty and morality in the economic sphere. In these chapters we shall stop short at the Industrial Revolution, and make no attempt to follow the fortunes of the cloth trade through the great transformation which produced modern economic society.

Such a limitation of the subject demands some explanation as to what one means by the Industrial Revolution, and some statement of the approximate date at which the survey is to conclude. The term 'Industrial Revolution' is here used in the narrowest sense of the words; it is not meant to imply the great expansion of trade or the vast increase in population: it does not embrace the growth of capitalism, the freeing of industry and commerce from customary or legal restraints, or the attempt to formulate and apply exact economic science.¹ It is used to imply solely the invention of machinery, and the application of steam, for it was these two factors which constituted the real revolution, and were the cause of many of the other developments. The inventions of Arkwright, Hargreaves, Cartwright, and the rest comprised the first step; the 'discovery' (if so one might call it) of iron, coal, and steam-power was the second. As the possibilities of these two revelations were more clearly realized, and the inventions brought nearer

¹ See J. H. Clapham on 'Economic Change', *Cambridge Modern History*, x. 727.

to perfection, machinery and steam-power were adopted, and the inevitable outcome was the congregation of labour in the factory system. Thus in these chapters we are concerned with the state of the cloth industry before the adoption of steam-driven machinery.

Can one fix a date for the Industrial Revolution as here defined? It is dangerous to attempt to assign definite dates to any social or economic change, and the Industrial Revolution is no exception in this respect. Since the inventions, the application of steam, and the tremendous expansion in the use of coal are the outstanding causes of the change, it might be argued that the dates on which these discoveries were made should be regarded as marking the inauguration of the new era, and the invention of the power-loom by Cartwright in 1785 should be reckoned as the commencement of the Industrial Revolution. Such a course would be attended by many possible misconceptions; one must keep in mind the imperfections of the machines themselves, and the need for improvements before they could be generally adopted; also, there was the difficulty of getting the new methods known and adopted, as well as the violent opposition of the workpeople. Therefore the adoption of factory organization and the introduction of machinery came very slowly. There were scarcely twenty factories in Yorkshire in 1800; the power-loom was not introduced into Bradford till 1826, when it was the cause of fierce strife and riots¹; combing was done by hand until well into the forties,² and many technical difficulties rendered it undesirable to use the power-loom in the woollen industry until about 1850. Writers in the middle of last century speak of the widespread existence of the cottage system,³ and the memories of people still alive reach back to the days when the hand-loom was to be found in almost every cottage. Thus we come to the conclusion that the Industrial Revolution had little more than its beginnings in the eighteenth century. The great change came first in the cotton industry,

¹ James, *History of the Worsted Manufacture*, p. 356 n.

² Burnley, *History of Wool and Wool-combing*, p. 195.

³ Forbes, Lecture at 1851 Exhibition, ii. 316-17, estimated that 50 per cent. of the textile workers were still outside the factory. Jackson, in his *History*

⁴ *Burnsley* (1858), p. 168, states of the linen industry that 4,000 hand-loom were still in use as against 1,000 power-loom.

then in the manufacture of worsteds, and lastly in the making of woollen cloths. In the Yorkshire branches of the textile industry, the revolution did not actually take place until the nineteenth century; the face of Yorkshire had been little altered by 1800, and half a century had still to elapse before it could be claimed that the factory and the power-driven machinery had displaced the old hand methods. Our survey, therefore, will broadly consider the whole of the eighteenth century.

a) The Distribution of the Industry

In the eighteenth century the manufacture of cloths was carried on in the same regions as in 1470, though concentrated even more than at that date in the three areas of East Anglia, the West of England, and Yorkshire. A famous agitation in 1752, concerning the false winding of yarn, brought petitions from such widely scattered districts as Leeds, Halifax, Norwich, Frome, Colchester, London, Wiltshire, Devonshire, Saffron Walden, Andover, Taunton, Nottingham, Grantham, Lancashire, Stourbridge, Kidderminster, Kendal, Coventry, &c.,¹ thus indicating the widespread national character of the industry. As in the country so in Yorkshire. The industry was carried on in most parts of the county, but still there were certain tracts which could definitely be labelled textile, or non-textile, and, further, could be marked out according to the predominant type of cloth produced, whether worsted or woollen, white or mixed. Descending to a further subdivision, one could point to the specialization of Wakefield on 'tammies', Leeds on broad cloths and camlets, Halifax on shalloons and kerseys, and so forth.

As a rough generalization, one might say that Leeds was the north-eastern limit of the clothing area. A line drawn along the watershed between Airedale and Wharfedale would mark the northern boundary, whilst another line, passing from Leeds south to Wakefield, and then turning south-west towards Huddersfield, would denote the eastern limit. 'Not a single manufacturer is to be found more than one mile east or two miles north of Leeds',² declare many writers and directories of the century. Chapel Allerton, now part of Leeds, was entirely

¹ *House of Commons Journals*, xxvi. 320.

² This quotation is found in all the histories, guides, &c., of Leeds, 1797 onwards, e.g. *Leeds Guide* (1806), pp. 100-1.

outside the clothing district, and there was 'scarcely a single manufacturer of cloth to be found in the whole village'.¹ As for Barwick-in-Elmet and neighbouring villages, they were as entirely without the clothing area as was the quietest little village in the Vale of York, being solely agricultural.²

Before elaborating the above statements, one must make the necessary modifications. With an industry as yet free from absolute dependence upon coal and iron supplies, it was an easy matter to carry on some branch of the manufacture wherever wool could be obtained and labour was available. Thus throughout almost the whole of the North and East Ridings there were to be found persons occupied in one or other of the many processes involved in the manufacture of the finished cloth. Around Ripon and Middleham there was a considerable 'manufactory' of woollen goods and preparation of yarn.³ Even so late as 1810 the drawback on soap for Masham amounted to £89 9s., and the total for the North Riding reached £204 15s. 7d.⁴ Some of the yarn prepared in these northern dales was sent to be woven in the West Riding area, but a considerable quantity was utilized at home, being made into woollens at Masham⁵ and Middleham,⁶ into carpets at Ripon,⁷ or into knitted goods in the recesses of Wensleydale and Swaledale. This latter occupation was an extension of the old Westmorland knitting industry. The women of the East Riding were preparing linen yarn, and they of Cleveland were 'spinning of worsted', or knitting.⁸ Defoe found at Richmond 'a manufactory of knit-yarn stockings for servants and ordinary people. Every family is employed in this way, both great and small. Here you may buy the smallest

¹ The same applies to this extract. It is a stock sentence, in all the local publications of the period.

² *Leeds Guide*, p. 163.

See advertisements in Leeds newspaper, e.g. *Leeds Mercury*, October 12, 1731: 'Wanted, 4 or 6 hands to card and spin . . . Can be either a family or individuals.' This was for Middleham.

³ See table in James, p. 369. This drawback was a rebate paid to clothiers and preparers of yarn out of the duty paid on soap. The rebate was allowed on all soap used for industrial purposes. See section on Worsted Committee. In 1810, the drawback for Leeds, £353 17s. 11d.; Wakefield, £111 13s. 3d.

⁴ *British Directory*, v. 131.

⁵ *Dodsley's Road Book*, 1756.

Numerous advertisements of Ripon Carpet Manufactory, in *Leeds Mercury*, e.g. 1769 and 1775.

⁸ Young, *Northern Tour*, ii. 180. The 'worsted' was not the thin fibre used for weaving, but the thicker thread such as is used in knitting, and is to-day referred to indifferently as 'wool' or 'worsted'.

sized pairs for children at 1s. 6d. the dozen pairs, sometimes less.¹ Another line was the making of 'knit wool caps for seamen'.² These goods, evidently of a common order, were either worn by the producers, sold at the small fairs and markets of Dent, Bedale, &c., or taken by the more hardy over the moors to Kirkby Stephen and Kendal, whence they went to supply the needs of 'servants and ordinary people' of other counties.³ A similar industry was carried on at Doncaster, on a somewhat more ambitious scale. In the sixteenth century Doncaster was famous for the knitting of stockings, waistcoats, gloves, and other articles of attire,⁴ the industry being almost entirely in the hands of women. The manufacture continued through the seventeenth century, and was flourishing at the time of Defoe's tour (1723-4), and even much later. This industry employed large numbers of spinners and combers, who also spent part of their time preparing yarn for the weavers of the West Riding. Thus over the whole of the North and West Riding, and in part of the eastern area, some form of working in wool was being carried on. But in scarcely any centre, except Ripon, was it considerable, and this diffused manufacture was insignificant when compared with the activity of the Leeds, Halifax, and Wakefield regions.

The cloth area, stretching from Leeds and Wakefield to beyond the border,⁵ can be roughly divided as follows: (1) The *worsted* field, i.e. the country stretching from Bradford to 15 miles west and north-west of Halifax, comprising the upper valleys of the Aire and Calder, and including Halifax, Keighley, Haworth, and Colne. To this list must be added Wakefield and Leeds, which were of secondary importance as centres of the worsted industry. (2) The *woollen* district, lying within a pentagon of

¹ Defoe, *op. cit.* iii. 148.

² Dodsley's *Road Book*, 1756, under 'Richmond'. In 1595 Peck stated that there were above 1,000 knitters in and about Richmond, engaged in knitting stockings (*D. S. P., Eliz.*, cclii. 2).

³ Defoe, *op. cit.*, iii. 149, and Bigland, *op. cit.*, p. 739.

⁴ Peck stated in 1595 that there were 120 persons knitting stockings in Doncaster. See also *Life of Marmaduke Rawdon* (Camden Soc.), p. 116 (1664). Also Baskerville's *Tour*, in *Portland MSS., Hist. MSS. Comm.*, ii. 110-12. Also Defoe, *op. cit.*, iii. 1.

⁵ Rochdale, Bury, and even Manchester, with a large slice of east Lancashire, were engaged to a considerable extent in the manufacture of woollens. Rochdale and Bury are noted by Defoe as being 'very considerable for a sort of coarse goods called half-thicks and kersies' (*Tour*, iii. 133).

which the corners were, roughly, Wakefield, Huddersfield, Halifax, Bradford, and Leeds, with its great market at the latter town. In this district a further important subdivision is possible, according to the nature of the product: (a) the district containing the following places manufactured *mixed* cloths, in which the wool had been dyed before it was woven: Leeds parish, Morley, Gildersome, Adwalton, Drighlington, Pudsey, Farsley, Calverley, Eccleshill, Idle, Baildon, Yeadon, Guiseley,



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Rawdon, and Horsforth (i. e. chiefly in the Aire valley); also Batley, Dewsbury, Ossett, Horbury, and the Calder Vale generally, making smaller quantities; (b) the *white* cloth came from the district occupied by the following places: Alverthorpe, Ossett, Kirkheaton, Dewsbury, Batley, Hopton, Mirfield, Cleckheaton, Littleton¹ (i. e. chiefly in the Calder valley), Bowling, Shipley, Morley, Idle, and a little from Bradford.

i. e. what we now know as the heavy woollen and shoddy districts; this division of the clothing area is drawn from the directories, &c. of Leeds, Leeds Guide, 1806, pp. 100-1, and the documents connected with the Leeds Cloth Halls.

Thus the white cloth area was a tract of country forming an oblique belt across the hills separating the Aire and the Calder, beginning about one mile west of Wakefield, leaving Halifax and Huddersfield a little to the left, terminating at Shipley, and nowhere coming within six miles of Leeds on the eastern edge. The two districts, as will be seen from the map, are generally distinct, but intermingle a little, especially at their south-eastern and north-western extremities.¹

Throughout the whole of the county west of Leeds, scattered in isolated farm-houses in the western reaches, but gathered into villages in the valleys to the east,² the industry was carried on. The growth of villages as centres of industry during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was one of the great features of the period. Such villages as Woodhouse, Beeston, Armley, Hunslet,³ Haworth, Holbeck, Churwell, and Morley had grown steadily as cloth-making centres, and this growth was probably in part at the expense of the larger towns. Thus Leeds, Wakefield, and Halifax were quite correct when they declared, in 1627, that 'there is not that quantitie of cloth made in these three towns and their precincts as is made in the severall and dispersed towns and villages about us . . . and the most of the inhabitants in these places that are of anie abilitie are not clothiers, but gentlemen, yeomen, ffarmers, and men of other trades and professions'.⁴ This statement applied with greater force to the eighteenth century, when the commercial progress of the towns caused a large increase in rents, and drove many clothiers out to the suburbs or even farther afield. The demand for land in and around Leeds was very great during the last half of the century, because of 'the encrease of opulence and population in the town and neighbourhood of Leeds'.⁵ One witness before the Parliamentary Committee of 1806 declared that 'since my remembrance there were many hundred clothiers in the township of Leeds, and I believe there are but five now; . . . they have been driven out and found habitation where the rents were cheaper'. Another Yorkshire-

¹ *Leeds Guide*, 1806, p. 101.

² Defoe, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

³ Hunslet was by 1650 a thriving place with 200 families, and demanding that its chapel should be made into a church (Thoresby, *Ducatus*, p. 177).

⁴ *D. S. P., Chas. I.*, lxi, 82 and 84. Petition concerning ship money.

⁵ *Report on the Woollen Manufacture*, 1806, iii. 128.

can spoke of the 'decrease of master manufacturers in the immediate neighbourhood of large towns, especially in two or three populous hamlets adjoining to Leeds, whence they had migrated to a greater distance in the country, where they might enjoy a little land and other conveniences and comforts'.¹ The towns were not the centres of manufacture, but were chiefly engaged in the finishing processes, in the marketing of raw material, cloth, and food-stuffs, and in providing accommodation for merchants, clothiers, and travellers; or they were the homes of merchants, clergy, officials, and professional men. Leeds, for instance, in 1797 was the home of over 1,400 merchants and traders,² whose genteel residences lined Hunslet Lane, Bear Lane, Meadow Lane, and Albion Street. For the accommodation of travellers and villagers coming to market there were no less than 103 inns. Thus on the eve of the Industrial Revolution the distribution of the manufacture might be summed up as follows: Spinning and weaving in the villages and farms scattered over the whole of the Riding; fulling along the banks of the streams; dyeing, dressing, finishing, and marketing in the towns. This resulted in a fairly uniform distribution of population throughout the Riding. Most of the towns had less than 10,000 inhabitants, and the total number of urban dwellers as late as 1811³ amounted to only about a quarter of the population of the whole Riding.

(b) *The Homes of the Workers*

When Leland passed through Yorkshire in the sixteenth century he noticed wooden houses in many parts of the county. By 1700, however, brick and stone were general throughout the whole clothing area, and the wooden structures had almost, if not entirely, disappeared. Stone was largely used wherever available, and the houses of the Pennine slopes and the western districts were entirely of stone,⁴ giving the landscape that grey solid appearance which still survives, mellowed by a century's deposit of soot and smoke. Bradford was largely built of stone, as in Leeds⁵ and Wakefield brick buildings preponderated.

¹ *Reports*, 1800, iii, 11. Also Eden, *The State of the Poor* (1797), iii, 847.

² *Leeds Directory*, 1797, List of Merchants, &c.

³ See Aikin, *England Described* (1818), pp. 68-9; and Census Returns, 1841.

⁴ Deane, *op. cit.*, iii, *passim*.

⁵ *Description of Leeds*, by Dodsley, 1754.

The houses were of all shapes and sizes; the larger possessed two storeys, but the greater number of dwellings enjoyed only one. In the smaller dwellings the work was carried on in the living-room or the sleeping-chamber, but to many houses a low shed was appended, with a long 'weaver's window', in front of which the loom was erected. As the type of house grew larger, other rooms and outhouses were added, and the dwelling of the average well-to-do yeoman or clothier could boast living-rooms, pantry, attic, loom-shop, stable, farm-buildings,¹ and a yard. The upper storey of many houses was approached by an external staircase, instances of which are still to be seen. Casement windows with pebble glasses let in the light, and there was often some simple attempt at decoration of the exterior by training ivy and creepers over the walls.

Few cottages were without a piece of land. The West Riding was one of the strongholds of the small freeholders, who possessed holdings ranging from half a dozen acres to 15 or 20. The sides of the hills around Halifax were 'spread with enclosures from two acres to six or seven each, seldom more, and every three or four pieces of land had a house belonging to them'.² All parts of the Riding exhibited the same feature. Where there was not a definite freehold, many Yorkshire proprietors had attempted with success to foster the joint occupation of farming and weaving. Sir Walter Calverley in the early part of the century induced many clothiers to come and reside on his estate by providing fulling mills, and by making it possible for the farmer to be a clothier, and the clothier to work as a farmer.³ In the last decade of the same century many landlords took advantage of the exodus which was taking place

¹ Note the following typical advertisements of houses: 'To be lett. A house, stable, and croft, adjoining on the upper side of Woodhouse Moor, very convenient for a clothier' (*Leeds Mercury*, April 11, 1738). 'To be lett. One good fashionable new built house, six rooms on a floor, one large shop with a chamber over it, a handsome court planted with wall fruit, a garden and orchard, and all other convenient outhouses . . . fit for a gentleman or any substantial tradesman dealing in the woollen manufacture . . . also four closes of land adjoining the same, about sixteen days work' (*Leeds Mercury*, August 27, 1737). 'To be Lett. A very Commodious Dwelling House, with Stables, Dye-House, Tenters, and all other conveniences proper for a Cloth Maker; together with nearly seven Acres of land adjoining. There is also a Cottage House contiguous thereto very convenient for a Journeyman Cloth Maker' (*Leeds Intelligencer*, February 27, 1750).

² Deloe, *op. cit.*, iii. 135.

³ Laurence's *Duty of a Steward* (1727), p. 8.

from Leeds to induce clothiers to come and live on what had formerly been farming centres. Mr. J. Graham, in his evidence before the Committee in 1806, dwelt upon this aspect, and indicated the nature of the movement. He himself had an estate which had been let out in agricultural leaseholds. The leases terminated in 1796, whereupon Graham divided the farms into small allotments for clothiers. He visited the clothiers' houses in the neighbourhood, in order to discover the most suitable type of building, and then erected about fourteen houses, to each of which he attached five to ten acres.¹ These holdings were immediately occupied by clothiers, and the venture was so successful that other landowners followed in Graham's footsteps. Farmers became clothiers, and small villages grew rapidly into flourishing, though scattered, communities. Thus Leeds was surrounded by a great body of clothiers, living dispersed over the countryside, in houses to which holdings of land were attached.

But these small holdings in land were not intended to make farming a serious rival to the textile industry. They were a subsidiary source of livelihood, and might provide facilities for farming as a by-occupation, or might be utilized largely for textile purposes. On these pieces of land the tenter frames and wool hedges were erected, and tenter frames were as familiar features of the landscape as advertisement hoardings are today. The clothier might erect these frames on his own parcel of ground, or on some piece of waste land on which the clothiers of the district obtained permission to set up wool hedges and tenter frames, paying a small sum annually for the privilege.² If not used in this manner, the land was devoted to the growth of hardy crops which required little attention, or was turned into a pasture, for the rearing of live stock. Defoe found the land round Halifax employed in sustaining horses and cows (which were owned by all except the very poorest), 'by which means the small pieces of land about each house are occupied. As for corn, they scarcely sow enough to feed their poultry.'³

¹ *Reports*, 1806, iii, 444.

² See maps of Leeds in Thoresby Soc. publications, e.g. ix, p. 204. Also extracts from Leeds Manor Court Rolls (vol. ix), for reference to wool hedges and tenter frames on Woodhouse Moor.

³ Defoe, *op. cit.*, iii, 135.

Around Leeds a similar state of affairs existed; the land was used generally 'not in corn, but in grass, in keeping cows and keeping a galloway (horse or pony), or something of that kind, and in tenters'.¹ Crops received little attention, even in the most fertile districts. Graham remarked that some of his new tenants had expressed a desire to have a little ploughed land, but he had found that whenever a manufacturer engaged in working arable land he was sure to waste all the money he was earning by making cloth.² In some parts oats were grown in order to supply meal, whilst potatoes were cultivated in all parts of the Riding. But these products were of secondary importance, and hence the husbandry was of a perfunctory character, and the tillage backward and unprogressive. Traditional methods held undisputed sway, and the clothiers were so busy advancing their textile businesses that they had little time to devote to improving their methods of agriculture. Custom therefore reigned supreme: 'Such is the force of prejudice', declared a writer, about 1800, with reference to the weavers of Pudsey, 'that if any one does not follow the old course of husbandry, he is laughed at as a visionary and innovator. The chief reason which they advance in defence of this old and antiquated procedure is that their forefathers have practised it.'³ The majority of the clothiers' lands were therefore generally under-utilized, but, provided the horse did not die of starvation, the cow cease to yield milk, or the hens refuse to lay, there was no call for a revision of the accepted order, and no need for a reformation of the agricultural and pastoral economy which was the heritage of centuries.

Such were the homes in which the industry of the eighteenth century was carried on. The alliance of land and loom was a great benefit to the clothing population, especially to the weavers, who often were compelled to lay aside the shuttle because of scarcity of yarn, but who were able to fill up this time by working in their garden, or by performing some necessary piece of work on the land attached to their house. Life in these cottages and farms was far from luxurious; the hours

¹ *Reports*, 1806, iii. 14.

² *Ibid.*, p. 144. Some of Graham's tenants, with large families, kept two or three cows, and in such cases held land up to 15 acres, all pasture.

³ *Annals of Agriculture*, xl. 135, quoted by Cunningham, ii. 564.

of labour were long, the tasks arduous, and the fruits of hard toil far from being rich or plentiful. In fact, as all the early Leeds directories boasted, the domestic worker, whether master or man, was 'for the most part blessed with the comforts without the superfluities of life'¹—a statement which was quite true, provided we place the standard of 'comforts' sufficiently low.

(c) *Industrial Organization*

In considering the structure of the Yorkshire industry it is necessary to remember now the existence of two branches, namely, the worsted and the woollen. The organization of the two manufactures was different in many respects, so we must distinguish therefore between the two, and study each separately.

The woollen industry was still largely in the hands of the small independent clothiers. These were the men who occupied the small freeholds throughout the Riding, and were cloth-makers on a small scale with a little farming as a by-occupation. They possessed their own spinning and weaving machinery, and carried through most of the processes themselves. The father went to the market and purchased his wool, his wife and children carded and spun it, and if they were unable to provide him with an adequate supply of yarn some of the wool would be put out to be spun in neighbouring cottages. With the help of a son, apprentice, or journeyman, the clothier dyed his wool, wove the piece, took it to the fulling mill, and thence, in its rough and unfinished condition, to his stall in the market or his stand in the cloth hall. Out of his receipts he had to pay for raw materials, a fee for fulling, and wages for any external assistance; then the remainder was entirely his own, the profit on his venture, and the price of the labour of himself and family. Such a man would never produce more than two pieces per week,² and many would get only one cloth to the weekly market. The profits, therefore, would not be large, and a livelihood could be obtained only by dint of hard work and frugal habits.³ The majority of these men had their three to fifteen acres of land,

¹ This extract will be found in every directory or guide published between 1700 and 1810.

² Deloe, *op. cit.*, iii. 117.

³ Committee on Woollen Manufacture, *Reports*, 1806, iii, *passim*. See also Aikin, *op. cit.*, p. 52, for remarks concerning 'frugality and industry'.

on which the family cow, pigs, and poultry were fed. They also had a horse or ass on which to carry their wares to and from the market; but many of the poorer clothiers could not afford this luxury, and the sight of a man carrying his piece of cloth on head or shoulders was very common. Mayhall instances a man, Richard Wilson, of Ossett, who had two pieces of broad cloth ready for sale.¹ Not possessing a beast of burden, he carried one cloth on his head to Leeds, a distance of about seven miles, and there sold it. His customer also offered to buy the other piece; Wilson thereupon walked back to Ossett to fetch it, delivered the cloth at the merchant's warehouse, completed the transaction, and then returned home. The day's business had included a 28 miles walk, for half of which the clothier had been carrying a somewhat heavy load.

The existence of this class was rendered possible by the fact that only a small amount of capital was required for setting up as a clothier on such a scale. According to the *London Tradesman* (1757), £100 to £500 was the sum required in order to set up as a master weaver in London,² and as rents, &c., were probably lower in a Yorkshire village than in the capital, £100-£150 would be more than ample for the purpose in the West Riding industry. The initial expenses were comparatively light, and it was generally easy for a man with a clean reputation to get credit to the extent of a week's supply of wool. Thus the apprentice, at the end of his period of training, could look forward with some degree of confidence to the day when he would have acquired a sufficient amount of capital and be able to set up as his own master. He might borrow the money at once, or work as a journeyman until he had saved the requisite sum; then he acquired his house, ground, and loom, and set to work as an independent manufacturer. Added to this consideration is the fact that the system of open marketing placed the small producer on almost equal terms with his larger rival. The street markets and cloth halls made it possible for the small clothier to dispose of his wares easily, and long after the big men had adopted other methods of sale the cottagers clung to their old form of market.

¹ Mayhall, *Annals of Yorkshire*, i, 122, under date 1734.

² *The London Tradesman*, by R. Campbell, 1757; see pp. 201 and 340.

But although entry was so easy, and although the class of small clothiers was very numerous in Yorkshire, the small man did not hold the whole of the woollen field. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there had been a steady increase in the number of big clothiers,¹ and although this class probably never attained the status or the extent of the West of England clothiers, it did comprise the upper stratum of the Yorkshire cloth-makers, and was a powerful body during the later years of the eighteenth century.

The wealthy clothier was generally a development from the lower grade which we have just described, and only differed from the meaner master in the number of outside hands he employed, and in the amount of trade which he transacted. Thus there were clothiers of every gradation, from the smallest independent master, employing only his own family, to the wealthy clothier, employing a large number of people in his house and loom-shop, as well as others who worked for him in their own homes. The big man went to the wool markets, or into the wool-producing counties, to purchase his supplies of raw material. These he brought home, and then set his apprentices and journeymen, his own family, and the children of his employees to work converting the raw wool into yarn, and then into cloth. He often took a hand at the loom (especially if he was engaged in training an apprentice), he generally dyed the wool or the piece himself, and when the cloth was finished he took it to the merchant's warehouse or to the cloth-market. Let us take one or two instances to illustrate the nature of such businesses. These cases are drawn from the report of 1806, and they therefore represent the state of industrial organization just before the factory had begun to assert its influence. Elijah Brooke, of Morley, had served his period of apprenticeship, and then, after working for some time as a journeyman, in 1780 he set up as a clothier, making mixed broad cloths in Morley.² His own house accommodated only one loom, and this was worked by himself, his son, or an apprentice, his own daughter spending her whole time

¹ A witness in 1806, *Reports*, iii. 160, stated: 'Fifty years ago he was bought a great clothier that made two pieces in a week, and now if he makes six or eight, or ten, he is not the largest by far. Some make two in a week and some make twenty.'

² *Reports*, 1806, iii. 129-38.

spinning wool for this loom. He employed twelve journeymen, who were all engaged either spinning or weaving in their own homes, and who were paid by piece rate. Similarly, J. Ellis, of Arnley,¹ was a maker of superfine broad cloths; he had a spinning jenny and three looms, all of which were in his own workrooms. His wife did not take part in the affairs of the business, but he, his apprentice, and a journeyman each worked a loom. Another man and his wife spun yarn for him in the master's shop, two or three children sorted his wool, and another woman was engaged in spinning in her own house. These two clothiers belonged to what one might call the middle class, and there were many such men, employing eight to twelve persons, either in the rooms of the master or the homes of the workpeople themselves.

Higher still in the industrial scale came the really big clothiers who were to be found in many parts, especially around Leeds, during the latter half of the eighteenth century. These men were large employers, and, in the congregation of workpeople in their shops, they established miniature factories many years before the perfection of the power loom or the application of steam. For instance, James Walker of Wortley employed twenty-one looms, of which eleven were in his own loom-shop, and the remainder erected in the houses of his weavers.² L. Atkinson, of Huddersfield, had seventeen looms in one room, and also employed weavers who worked in their own abodes.³ These looms were all worked by hand, and in addition to the men engaged in weaving there were many women and children busy preparing yarn. Thus we see that there was no standard size of master clothier. He might be of any status, from the small man, employing his own family and one or two outsiders, to the wealthy clothier, with his two-score looms and his hall a hundred workpeople.

Turning to the organization of the worsted industry, conditions were somewhat different. Here was an industry introduced comparatively late, and superimposed on the woollen manufacture. It had to fight its way to a place in the home and foreign markets, and this could only be done by men who possessed some amount of capital, who were capable of defraying

¹ *Reports*, 1806, iii. 5-30.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 174-83.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 219-23.

the initial costs, and willing to overcome many difficulties before they achieved success. Whether these men were Norfolk merchants or of local origin, they built up the industry on a much more capitalistic basis than was the case in the woollen trade. The small independent clothier never existed in the worsted industry, but in his place stood a man who closely resembled the clothiers of the West of England or those wealthier woollen clothiers of the West Riding whose status we have just been considering. The worsted master was usually a large employer, with a flock of workpeople at his command. This contrast is seen in the difference between the cloth halls at which woollens and worsteds were sold. The halls at Leeds were intended to accommodate the legion of small woollen clothiers who sought the Leeds market; hence, the White Cloth Hall provided 1,210 stands, and the Mixed Cloth Hall found room for 1,770 stallholders. The number of worsted masters was much smaller, but the amount which each man had for sale much greater, and thus the Worsted Cloth Hall at Bradford accommodated only 258 salesmen, but allowed each to have a separate room for himself and his pieces.

This then was the great difference between the two branches of the cloth industry; in the woollen trade a large number of small men, in the worsted a small number of big men. The worsted master was generally the head of a comparatively large establishment. He went to the chief fairs, or to the farmers, buying considerable quantities of wool, which he then brought home and gave into the hands of his sorters and dyers, who worked under his supervision. The wool was then given out to be combed and spun over a wide expanse of country. The yarn thus produced was again collected. Sometimes it was sold, especially to the southern weavers, but in most cases it was handed out to domestic weavers round about, by whom it was woven into cloth, the weavers being paid according to a piece rate. Professor Clapham cites the case of Mr. Greenwood of Oxenhope,¹ near Haworth, who bought wool, combed and dyed it at home with the assistance of a few journeymen, gave it out to be spun, and then sold the yarn. There were many such

¹ Article on 'Industrial Organization of Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, in *Economic Journal*, xvi, p. 517.

men, master woolcombers and spinners, who prepared yarn on a large scale. On the other hand, many worsted masters carried on all the processes of manufacture from sorting to weaving. The early history of the Haggas family gives an admirable instance of the kind. In 1715 James Haggas was bound apprentice to a Halifax worsted weaver. On the completion of his training he went to live at Weethhead, above Fell Lane, Keighley, and here set up as a manufacturer of stuffs, employing hand-combers and weavers, and selling his pieces at Halifax every Saturday. His son James went to the Lincolnshire fairs to buy long wool, which was brought home, sorted at Oakworth Hall, where was the warehouse, and then given out to the various workpeople. The pieces were woven in the houses scattered over the hillsides, and every Friday, the day before market-day, men might be seen going to Weethhead, with heavy pieces on head or shoulders, and returning with bags of warp and weft.¹ Sam Hill of Soyland, near Halifax, is an excellent illustration of the large woollen clothier who became a producer of worsted goods. On February 3, 1737, he dispatched 200 shalloons to a London merchant, and a week later announced that he would forward a second 200 within seven days. How many of these cloths were the products of his own employees we are not told, but from one or two remarks concerning his workmen and the amount of his wool purchases we gather that he was quite a large employer.²

Thus, to recapitulate, the manufacture of woollen cloth was still in the hands of small clothiers, though the larger employer was by no means uncommon, whilst the worsted industry was entirely in the hands of masters who carried on business upon a considerable scale. These men made the cloth; but they seldom finished it. The small woollen clothier in particular had no equipment for the adequate dressing of the pieces which he and his assistants wove. Hence when the cloth was taken from the loom it was carried to some fulling mill, the property of another man, and then, after being fullled, dried, and tentered, was sold at the market 'in the white' or 'in the raw'. The cloth had still to undergo the processes of shearing, dressing,

¹ Hodgson, *Textile Manufactures of Keighley*, pp. 47-8.

² *Letter Books*, nos. 116, 125, 133, and 134.

lyeing, &c., and these branches of the industry were carried on by another class of men, who possessed the necessary equipment. The master cloth-dresser, cloth-worker, dyer, and fuller lived in the market-towns, or along the banks of some stream as near the cloth-market as possible. They rented or owned the building in which they worked, laid down capital in providing the necessary machinery, and employed journeymen to assist them in the task of dressing and finishing pieces. They worked on a commission system, for they seldom owned the pieces upon which they were working. In a few cases the dyer or finisher went into the market, bought the rough pieces from the clothier, finished them, and then sold them to merchants, middlemen, shopkeepers, or tailors; but generally the cloths at which the finisher was working were the property of some merchant, who had purchased them from the makers and then handed them over to receive the final treatment before taking them away to sell. In such cases the finisher received a fee for each cloth which he finished, out of which he had to pay the wages of his journeymen, the remainder being interest on his capital and profit to himself as *entrepreneur*.

There are still two figures in the eighteenth-century organization with which we have not dealt—namely, the merchant and the middleman. Their position and functions can most profitably be discussed when we turn to a consideration of the methods of marketing the Yorkshire cloths. But it may be well to state at this juncture that these men were very important elements in the domestic system. The merchant, either directly or through his agent, was rising to an altitude from which he could largely control the industrial field. Under the conditions of the seventeenth century, when the industry was not nearly so extensive or so highly developed, he had confined his attention almost entirely to the commercial aspect of the cloth trade; he had met the clothier in the market, bought pieces, which he handed over to the cloth-worker, and finally sold to his customers at home and abroad. He had little direct influence over the clothier or the finisher. But during the eighteenth century, and especially with the rise of the worsted industry, the merchant began to get a firmer grip over the industrial units. He commenced to buy direct from the maker, without

going into the market. He gave orders for large supplies of goods to be made according to a sample presented by the clothier, or in accordance with his own specifications. Some clothiers, especially worsted manufacturers, spent their whole time producing goods for one merchant or middleman, and their wares never saw the cloth-market. Thus these men became dependent upon the merchant, and worked directly under his control, executing his orders. The letters of Joseph Holroyd, a cloth-factor of Soyland, show him in 1706-7 acting as the agent of London and foreign merchants, and placing large orders for them with local clothiers. Merchants, when sending their orders, supplied detailed specifications and fixed maximum prices, and it was then Holroyd's business to obtain the required cloths in accordance with the wishes of his patrons. Many clothiers apparently spent their whole time supplying Holroyd, and their pieces never went into the public market.¹ The next step came when the merchant actually set up as a clothier himself, and figured in the double rôle of manufacturer and merchant. As manufacturer he owned looms and other utensils, and employed spinners and weavers making cloth out of his raw material according to his specifications. When the cloth was woven, it was finished in mills which were also his property, by men who were his employees, and when the cloth was actually completed it came into his hands and was sold by him in his capacity as merchant. Thus the maker and the merchant were combined in the same person, with the merchant as the predominating partner. These two important developments, the working to the order of the merchant, and the engrossment of the whole industrial procedure by the merchant, were very evident in the eighteenth century. A cloth-dresser declared in 1765² that 'some merchants make cloth themselves', and twenty years later Charles Clapham of Leeds described himself as a 'Merchant and Manufacturer of Worsted Stuffs'.³ The tendency developed rapidly during the next twenty years, and when the new possibilities of machinery and power were revealed,

¹ See *Letter Books*, Intro., pp. 6-8, and letters *passim*. For further treatment of the nature of merchants and factors, see chapter on markets and merchants, Chapter XI.

² *House of Commons' Journals*, xxx. 264.

³ *General Collected Reports* (1788), vol. xxxviii, no. 87.

It was chiefly the merchants who, possessing the necessary capital, seized upon them, set up mills, allied industry and commerce, and provided the capitalist system of the nineteenth century.

d) Apprenticeship in the Eighteenth Century

In a previous chapter we have observed the extent to which apprenticeship prevailed in the domestic system of industry, and have noted the attempts of Elizabethan legislation to enforce certain conditions upon those who sought an industrial education. Apprenticeship, and the law which regulated it, still survived in the eighteenth century, and found general theoretical acceptance in the North of England long after it had been placed in disregard elsewhere.

The clothier augmented his labour supply by taking one or more apprentices, who might be drawn from one of three sources. In the first place he might take his own son as a pupil, and teach the lad all that he himself knew concerning cloth-making. In such a case the apprenticeship was often an unwritten arrangement between father and son. There was no indenture, probably no promise to work for a stipulated number of years; it was a family agreement, intimate, loose, and informal.

Secondly, the clothier might take the son of a neighbour or friend, or some other youth whose father wished him to receive a definite and practical training. In this case a proper indenture was drawn up and duly signed. The clothier was frequently paid a premium to take the apprentice, and the indenture stated in the most minute detail the terms of the contract, and the obligations which were accepted on either hand. The nature of the agreement and of the relations between master and pupil will be best seen by quoting the following indenture, the original of which is in the Halifax Reference Library: ¹

'This Indenture made the Eleventh Day of December, . . . one thousand seven hundred and sixteen, BETWEEN Stephen Birch of Wyke in the County of York, Clothier, on the one part, and Thomas Gleadhill, Son of Jeremy Gleadhill of Halifax on the other part: WITNESSETH that the said Thomas Gleadhill hath of his own free Will and with the Consent of his friends,

¹ The indenture is made out on the customary printed form such as was used for the purpose. The special details were then filled in as required.

Put and Bound himself Apprentice to and with the said Stephen ffirth, and with him after the manner of an Apprentice to Dwell, Remain and Serve from the Day of the Date hereof, for, during and until the Term of 14 Years thence next following to be fully compleated and ended. During all which said Term the said Apprentice his said Master well and faithfully shall serve, his secrets shall keep, his Lawfull Commands shal do, Fornication or Adultery he shall not commit, Hurt or Damage to his . . . Master shall not do, nor Consent to be done, but he to his Power shall Lett it, and forthwith his . . . Master thereof Warn: Taverns or Alehouses he shall not haunt or frequent, unless it be about his Master's Business there to be done. At Dice, Cards, Tables, Bouls, or any other unlawfull Games he shall not play. The Goods of his Master he shall not Waste, nor them lend nor give to any Person without his Master's License. Forfornication with any woman within the Said Term he shall not contract, nor from his . . . Master's Service at any time absent himself; but as a true and faithful Apprentice he shall order and behave himself towards his Master and all his, as well in Words as in Deeds . . . And true and just Accounts of all his Master's Goods, Chattels, and Money committed to his Charge, or which shall come into his Hands, faithfully he shall give at all times when thereunto required by his Master.

And the said Stephen ffirth, for and in Consideration of the Summe of thirty shilling of Lawfull Money to him paid at the Ensealing hereof, doth Covenant, Promise and Grant by these Presents to and with the said Thomas Gleadhill his Apprentice that he shall and will Teach, Learn, and Inform him . . . or cause Him to be Taught . . . in the Trade, Mystery or Occupation of a Clothier, which he the said Master now useth, after the best manner of Knowledge that he . . . may or can, with all the circumstances thereunto belonging. And also shall find, provide to and for his . . . Apprentice sufficient and enough of Meat, Drink, Washing, and Lodging, together with all his Wearing Apparell, Linen, as well as Woollen Clothes, Shoes and Aprons, during the said Terme, And at the end of the Terme shall and Will allow him one Suit of Cloths for the Workinge Days, and another for the Holidays, fit and sufficient for Such an Apprentice to have.

Signed by) STEPHEN FFIRTH, (Seal.)
his Mark

THOMAS T GLEADHILL, (Seal.)

If the master was a worsted clothier, or a woollen clothier on an extensive scale, the indenture often stated that the apprentice should receive tuition in wool-buying, marketing, and all the

other branches of the trade in which the large manufacturer engaged. The following extract throws light upon this subject, and is taken from a unique type of indenture. In this agreement, dated 1792,¹ the master, a worsted manufacturer of Bingley, received a premium of sixteen guineas, in return for which he promised to train the apprentice in the 'Art and Mystery of Worsted Stuffmaker, in all its Branches . . . and also shall and will take his apprentice, in the last year of his Apprenticeship, to the Market, or into the Country, and instruct him in the buying of Wool, the Apprentice finding his own horse, and paying his own Travelling Expenses. And also shall and will allow unto his said Apprentice one Fortnight in each and every year during the said Term [five years], to go to School to improve himself in learning'.

If the youth was apprenticed to a cloth merchant, the master was to instruct him in the ways of foreign trade, and was expected to take his pupil with him when he went abroad.

Frequently the apprentice paid no premium, and on some occasions the master actually agreed to pay a small nominal wage to his pupil. Thus in 1704 John Burton of Bramley, clothier, undertook to teach James Wilkinson 'the misterie, craft and occupation of a cloathier, with meat, drink, washing and lodging and bedding, and paying one shilling per year as sallerie or wages, and finding him all cloathes and nessesories'.²

Thirdly, the apprentice might be drawn from the ranks of the Poor Law children. When the churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor had a 'poor child' of whom they wished to dispose, they could practically compel some eligible person to take the child as apprentice. In Leeds this power of binding a parish apprentice upon an unwilling ratepayer was very capriciously exercised, and caused many complaints during the eighteenth century. The Poor Law officials kept a book, in which they entered the names of those persons they thought were fit and able to bear the gift of an apprentice.³ Then, when a child had to be got rid of, one of the townsmen was approached and

¹ Apprenticeship Indenture of Thomas Lister, apprenticed to William Smith of Harden, near Bingley. Copy in Bradford Reference Library.

² Indenture, printed by J. H. Turner, *ShIPLEY, Idle, and District*, p. 67.

³ *Poor Law Commission Reports*, 1834, xxviii. 729.

informed that he must take the child.¹ Sometimes a clothier, knowing that his turn to take a parish apprentice was coming round, would anticipate the command of the Overseers by asking for a child. Generally, however, the clothier awaited the order, and then made his objections. He might point out that he still had with him the parish apprentice last allotted to him, and that it was not just to saddle him with another at that moment.² He might protest, as did Samuel Durrans of Hunslet, in 1711, that 'there are severall other persons that are more fit and proper than him to have apprentices putt to them, in regard he is unmarried'.³ He might explain that he was maintaining by his exertions an orphan relative, an aged father and mother, or some other person, who, but for his support, would fall upon the Poor Law charges, and hence, as he was doing his duty to the community, he should not be further burdened with a pauper child. Or he might refuse point-blank to take the apprentice. These objections, however, were seldom regarded (unless the plaintiff carried his protest to the local justices), and the citizen was ordered to welcome the child into his house. If he still refused, he was heavily fined. In 1775, for instance, Alice Halstead, a widow of Morley,⁴ was fined five and a half guineas because she refused to take a town apprentice. In Leeds the fine was generally £10, and the Poor Law funds of that town often profited to the extent of £1,000 a year by reason of the fines imposed upon those who refused to take such children.⁵ The Overseers were only too pleased to get children off their hands, and often placed out those who were obviously physically or mentally unfit. Fortunately, the person with whom the child was placed could appeal to the justices of the peace for relief from his burden, in case the apprentice proved to be useless. Thus in Leeds the justices from time to time ordered the Overseers to take back such children; one because he had a lame leg, another because he was afflicted 'with sore face, and not fit to be put out Apprentice',⁶ whilst a few were returned to the Poor Law authorities because it appeared to

¹ *Reports*, 1806, iii. 134.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 582 (1711).

³ Morley Town Book (1775), quoted in Smith's *Rambles round Morley*, p. 47.

⁴ Poor Law Commission, app., Yorkshire section, *Reports*, 1834, xxviii. 729.

⁵ *Leeds General Sessions*, 28 Geo. II, vol. vi, pp. 378-9.

⁶ *Leeds General Sessions*, ii. 381 (1711).

court that they were 'afflicted with a distemper called the ill, and not fitt to be an Apprentice'.¹

The apprentice was placed out when he reached the age of twelve or thirteen years, though Poor Law children were often disposed of at an earlier age. In the indenture quoted above the child was apprenticed for thirteen years; it seems that he had been left an orphan, and was therefore indentured at an early age for such a long period. Such a case, however, is exceptional, and generally apprenticeship was formally taken up between the twelfth and the sixteenth year. During the years which preceded apprenticeship the boy would frequently have been learning some branch of the trade whilst in his father's house, where he would help in wool-sorting, spinning, and other occupations such as were carried on in most houses in the textile area. We must never lose sight of this consideration, namely, that the domestic atmosphere was charged with industrial activity, and that the child grew up with the processes of manufacture going on all around him. Thus, before he was indentured, he would have a practical acquaintance with some phases of the industry. During his period of tuition he was a member of his master's family, an unpaid servant, and a pupil. He was tied carefully by the terms of his indenture, and his master had very considerable powers over him. His leisure-time and his morals were under supervision. 'Taverns and Alehouses he shall not frequent; games, etc., he shall not play', ran the indenture, and in 1757 the magistrates of Leeds made a declaration for the uplifting of the moral tone of both apprentices and journeymen.

'Publicans permitting Journeymen, Labourers, Servants, or Apprentices, to play at Cards, Dice, Draughts, Shuffleboards, Mississippi, or Billiard Tables, Skittles, Ninepins, or any other Implements of Gaming in their Houses, Outhouses, or Grounds, shall forfeit 40s. for the first offence, for every subsequent offence £10, to be levied by distress and sale; a quarter to the Informer, the rest to the Poor.'

If an apprentice or journeyman was known to be in a public house, his master could obtain a warrant from the justices for his apprehension.²

¹ *Ibid.*, vi. 388, and vii. 126.

1820, 12

² *Leedes Intelligencer*, August 30, 1757.

At times the youth made a bold bid for freedom, and ran away. One constantly encounters advertisements in the eighteenth-century newspapers similar to the following:¹

'Run away, on the fifteenth of November last, John Oldham, Apprentice to Jonathan Roebuck, Clothier, of Jacksonbridge, near Scholes. . . . The said John Oldham will be twenty years old the last Day of March next, is about five feet high, of a fair complexion, has light coloured flank Hair, and his little finger on each hand crooked. He had, when he absconded, a blue Waistcoat, and a light blue-grey Singlet, and a Shread Apron, red and blue, a pair of good Shoes with bright Metal Buckles, and slouch'd Hat. If the said Apprentice will return to his said Master, he will be kindly taken in, or if any Person harbours him after this Notice he will be prosecuted.'

Such occurrences were only to be expected, even in cases where the master was the very embodiment of kindness and good nature. The apprentice was bound for a number of years, generally seven, in some cases less, in others for a longer period. Long before that time was expired, he would be able, or suppose himself able, to do a man's work and earn man's wages. He would chafe at the terms of his indenture, and eventually seek his freedom. In 1806 Mr. William Cookson, a Leeds magistrate, declared that disputes often arose between apprentices and masters, especially towards the end of the period of apprenticeship. This, he stated, was due to the fact that the young men, as soon as they had learned their trade and were able to do the work of a journeyman, became arrogant, and made themselves obnoxious to their masters, in the hope that the latter would release them before the expiration of their full time. If the master refused to grant the apprentice his liberty, then the pupil ran away, and so, stated Mr. Cookson, 'there is scarcely a week that we (i.e. the magistrates) are not obliged to grant warrants to apprehend runaway apprentices.'² If the master was highly dissatisfied with the work and conduct of his apprentice, he could release him from the contract,³ and if the youth

¹ *Leeds Intelligencer*, February 26, 1782. Similar picture in *Intelligencer* for June 4, 1781.

² *Report*, 1806, iii. 172. Unruly apprentices were often placed in the House of Correction, e.g. 1710, *Leeds Gen. Sess.*, ii. 545, an apprentice put in the House of Correction 'as an Idle, dissolute and disorderly person'.

³ *Leeds Gen. Sess.*, ii. 56, 9th October, 12 William III; quarrel between master and apprentice. Court decided it was best they should part.

had been taken from the Poor Law officials, the justices of the peace could relieve him of a charge which was an unprofitable burden upon him.

The master was also protected by law against any attempts to entice away his pupil. From time to time the justices of the peace were called upon to order the restoration of an apprentice who had been seduced by another master from the care of his proper guardian. For instance, in 1698 Antony Dobson, of Armley, clothier, had taken a parish apprentice and formally indentured him, 'yet notwithstanding, one Peter Broadbent, of Armley, clothier, hath inveigled and Seduced the said [apprentice] out of the Service of the said . . . Dobson, and doth detain and keep him in his own Service, contrary to Law and Justice'. Dobson appealed to the justices of Leeds, who ordered that Broadbent should return the apprentice, or 'answer the contrary at his peril'.¹

On the other hand, the apprentice could appeal through his father or some relative to the justices of the peace for protection against the abuses of his master. The justices had to insist on both sides keeping to the terms of the indenture, and masters were constantly before the bench, charged with some breach of their trust. At almost every General Sessions held in Leeds during the first sixty years of the eighteenth century some apprentice was freed from his agreement to serve, because of offences on the part of his master. The grievance might be persistent cruelty, starvation, or neglect; it might be that the master was bankrupt, had fled his home, or was in gaol. Whatever the circumstances, the apprentice could obtain his freedom, if he proved that his master was not properly discharging his duties. Witness the following instances. In 1708² William Killingbeck, of Horsforth, made petition to the magistrates on behalf of his son, John, whom he had placed apprentice with Richard Hodgson, of Holbeck, clothier. The complaint was that Richard Hodgson hath left his family, and is run to Ireland, and that Sarah Hodgson, his wife, doth not follow the said Trade, nor take care that the Apprentice be instructed therein, whereby he is in danger to be Deprived of the means of

¹ *Leeds Gen. Sess. Records*, October 5, 1698, ii. 4

² *Ibid.*, October 6, 1708, ii. 425

etting his Living'; therefore it was ordered that the indenture should be cancelled and the youth allowed to serve the remainder of his time with another master. In the same year another apprentice obtained his freedom, because his master was incarcerated in Rothwell Gaol for debt,¹ and similar entries are scattered up and down the North Riding Quarter Sessions records. Charges of cruelty and neglect are no less common. In 1709 complaint is made 'that John Atkinson doth not allow his Apprentice Sufficient and necessary Meat, drink, and Apparel, and further, that he doth not take care that he be kept att and instructed in his Trade'.² In 1714 another apprentice reports that he 'hath not had sufficient Meat and Drink allowed him, and that his Master hath several Times immoderately corrected him';³ and four years later Sarah Brown complains that her master, a clothier, is teaching her nothing by way of a trade, and 'that she hath been very much crushed and abused by beating and otherwise in her master's service'.⁴ In all these instances the indenture was cancelled. If the apprentice was nearing the expiration of his time he seems to have been excused the remaining period, but if he had still some considerable time to serve he was ordered to place himself at once under another master.

One more topic remains to be discussed, namely, to what extent legal conditions of apprenticeship were being maintained. The Commission of 1806 declared that apprenticeship had maintained its ground more generally in the north than in the west, but it also went on to state that this survival was 'rather from custom than from a sense of the Law'.⁵ The apprenticeship system had woven itself into the fabric of the domestic industry and was now part and parcel of the economic structure. The youth who some day hoped to become a master needed a training in the various parts of the work, since he would have to be a man of many parts, and this comprehensive training could best be obtained by serving a period of apprenticeship under a fully qualified master. The law demanded that the period should be at least seven years, and the Leeds Cloth Halls at first

¹ *Leeds Gen. Sess. Records*, ii. 407.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 706.

³ *Reports*, 1806, iii, p. 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ii. 406.

⁵ *Ibid.*, iii. 77.

ade entry to any clothier who had not served the full legal period. We have seen, however, that in the early seventeenth century the full letter of the Elizabethan statute was not being observed in the West Riding, and during the eighteenth century the Act fell into greater neglect. This was inevitable in the widely scattered districts, and the justices of the peace never seem to have attempted to enforce the full demands of the Act of 1563.¹ In Leeds, where supervision was more easily effected, and where the Corporation was alive to a sense of its authority, some attempt was made, from the Revolution of 1688 to the middle of the eighteenth century, to enforce the terms of the Statute of Apprentices. The chief offenders in Leeds were the cloth-workers, i. e. those engaged in dressing the cloth. This industry seemed to be full of men who had not served an apprenticeship. They were constantly being brought before the justices on the charge of having violated the laws concerning apprenticeship, and were fined in accordance with the length of time they had been engaged in the occupation. Cloth-workers abounded as defendants in such cases, but clothiers, drapers, mercers, weavers, tallow-chandlers, and tailors also appeared amongst the offenders.² Occasionally there was an indictment of a master for having employed a journeyman who had not served the legal minimum of seven years.³ Thus the authorities of Leeds, during the first fifty years of the eighteenth century, tried to administer the statute, and to uphold the standard of

¹ The West Riding justices were not the only ones who looked with a lenient eye upon offenders. In February 1702 the Kendal weavers petitioned Parliament, declaring that when persons were prosecuted for violating the apprenticeship Act they met with such favour from the local justices that the law was of no avail.

² The indictments generally ran as follows: 'That XY . . . on the first day of May, in the fifth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Second, and continually after until the first day of May then next following, to wit in the space of one whole month, at Leeds, unlawfully, voluntarily, unjustly, and for his own gain hath sett up, occupied, used, and exercised the Craft, Mystery, or Occupation, of a Broad Woollen Clothworker, being an art, Mystery, or Manuall occupation, used or occupied within the Kingdom of England at the time of the passing of the 1563 Act] in which said Craft . . . the said XY never was brought up or served as an Apprentice therein by the space of seven years, in Evill Example of all others in the like case offending and against the peace of the King his Crown and Dignity, and against the form of the Statute'. It would seem from this indictment that offenders were fined after having practised the illegal occupation for the space of a month. Hence the statutory fine of 40s. was inflicted (*Leeds Sess. Records*, April 2, 1733).

³ *Ibid.*, v. 222, 228-9

apprenticeship in the town, whilst to some extent the rule of the Cloth Hall would maintain the same standard amongst the clothiers around Leeds.

After 1750, however, there is an absence of apprenticeship prosecutions in the Leeds General Sessions records, which seems to indicate that the justices had abandoned their attempts, and the latter part of the century was marked by a general breakdown of any legal restraint upon apprenticeship. The witnesses in an inquiry in 1802 all agreed on this point. One man declared that he always thought the Act of 1563 was obsolete; he himself had only served for four years, and of the general body of Yorkshire cloth-makers not one in ten of the workmen employed in the woollen manufacture had served a regular apprenticeship; many had not been apprenticed at all, and the others had done only three, four, or five years, according to the age at which they were indentured.¹ Another witness stated that, as cloth-dressing could be learned in a little over twelve months, there was not the least occasion for seven years' training, whilst a Mirfield representative in 1806 remarked that 'the apprenticeship law has never been thought of: . . . I never heard it mentioned before that I knew of'.²

The system of apprenticeship received a hard blow from the growth of the worsted industry in the West Riding. The Act of 1563 was understood to apply only to certain industries which existed and were of importance at the time of the passing of that statute. The worsted industry, however, came to the West Riding subsequent to that date, and so the question arose, Did the regulations concerning apprenticeship apply to the new industry? This was a difficult question, which no one could answer. Hence, although many young men were apprenticed to learn the worsted manufacture, many others entered into no such formal pledge of service. Further, in the manufacture of worsteds there was much greater division of labour amongst the employees. One was a wool-comber and nothing else, another spent all his time weaving, and so there was no need for that many-sided industrial proficiency which the woollen worker possessed. It would be quite unnecessary for a wool-

¹ *Report*, 1802, I, v. 303.

² *Reports*, 1806, III. 107. Evidence of Mr. Stanchife.

number to serve seven years when he could learn his trade in one or two, and it would be equally undesirable that a man whose whole task was to be weaving should bind himself as an apprentice for a long space of time. Thus, both in the worsted and woollen industries, apprenticeship was becoming obsolete. It was now entered upon only by those who intended to become masters; the rank and file of the workpeople never became formally indentured, and so a Bradford witness in 1806 asserted his belief that 'nineteen out of twenty have not served regular apprenticeships in the textile industry of the West Riding'.¹

This decline of the system is seen in the gradual relaxation of all attempts to enforce the legal period. The prosecution of a man for not having served seven years was a thing unknown in 1806,² and it was only the fear of the onslaught of machinery which made the domestic clothiers at that time seek for the reinvigoration of an Act which most of them had transgressed. The Cloth Halls of Leeds had long ago reduced their seven years' stipulation to five years, whilst the later Halls, at Colne, Bradford, and Huddersfield made no demand whatever concerning apprenticeship qualifications. Moreover, during the century, legislation itself admitted the justice of the case against the Elizabethan Act, and provided a loophole of escape from the rigour of its demands. In 1725 Parliament renewed its attempt to regulate the industry and to stamp out deceptive practices in the manufacture of broad cloth. This Act contained certain clauses concerning apprenticeship, and declared that 'no person who shall not have served for the space of seven years as an apprentice . . . in the trade of a broad clothier shall make or cause to be made any broad cloths, under the penalty of forfeiting £10 for every month' he has worked.³ This meant that a fully qualified clothier could not make broad cloths unless he had served for seven years as an apprentice to the broad cloth trade. The broad clothiers lived around Leeds, the narrow clothiers around Huddersfield and Halifax, and thus a distinction was fixed against the latter. This clause was obviously intended to reinvigorate the statute of 1563, but it seems to have had little effect, and when the Act was renewed in 1733⁴ the appren-

¹ *Reports*, 1806, iii. 184.
Statute 11 Geo. I. c. 24.

² *Ibid.*, *passim*.

⁴ 7 Geo. II. c. 25.

iceship clauses were removed entirely. In 1749¹ soldiers and sailors who might be unemployed in times of peace were allowed to take up a trade without having previously served an apprenticeship to that trade. A further enactment came in 1795, and attempted to deal with another special case, namely that of the wool-comber. Wool-combing formed a distinct part of the worsted industry, and combers held a virtual monopoly of their trade, because of the skill required. They spent the whole of their time at one particular process, and seem to have earned comparatively large wages by combing only. In 1795 it was felt that these skilled hand-workers might be left stranded in consequence of the coming of machinery, and some relaxation of the law must therefore be made in order to allow them to migrate to some other part of the textile field. The Act of 1795 therefore stated that all wool-combers who had served an apprenticeship to combing, but were willing to apply themselves to other branches of the trade, might transfer themselves to some other occupation without legal let or hindrance.² By this time legal apprenticeship was practically dead. It had fallen into neglect, and the clothiers who sought to revive the Elizabethan statute during the next few years did so not from love of the system, but because they wished to erect a bulwark against the onslaught of the factory and machinery. Their efforts ended in failure. Circumstances were changing, and economic conceptions were becoming modelled on the *laissez-faire* plan. The petitions of the domestic workers were of no avail; Parliament temporarily suspended the law concerning apprenticeship, and finally repealed it entirely in 1813. Apprenticeship for the future was to be a voluntary agreement between master and pupil, and as the factory system advanced its frontiers, and machine production gained ground, the scope for individual tuition and intimate personal relations largely disappeared. In the modern textile world there is little room for the apprentice.

(e) *The Journeyman in his relation to the Clothier*

The position of the journeyman during the eighteenth century varied according to the nature of his employer. Amongst the

¹ 22 Geo. II, c. 44.

² 35 Geo. III, c. 124

Smaller clothiers engaged in the woollen manufacture the gulf between master and man scarcely existed; the two often worked side by side, took their share of duty at the loom or the dye-vat, with very little apparent difference in status between them. The employer had probably been a journeyman in his day, and the journeyman looked forward to the time when he might possibly be able to set up as a small clothier for himself. With the larger masters such as the worsted chiefs, the big woollen clothiers, and the master cloth-finishers we rise to a more highly developed type of employer, and therefore the contrast between master and man is much more evident. The worsted master, for instance, carried on his trade with a real division of labour; he employed his wool-combers, spinners, and weavers, each a well-defined class in itself. He utilized a considerable quantity of capital, and thus stood in a position high above that of the people he employed. The big woollen clothiers, with their ten or twelve looms in one room, and the master dyers or cloth-dressers belonged to the same class, and in these branches of the cloth industry there were quite distinct bodies of employers and of workpeople.

In accordance with the statute of 1563 employees were still engaged in some cases by yearly contracts, but it is doubtful whether this rule was general throughout the whole industry. In Leeds the justices occasionally punished master cloth-workers for hiring, taking into service, and retaining men for a period of less than one year, but spinners and weavers were probably engaged on the same terms as to-day, given work whenever the clothier had any for them, and paid according to piece rates.

In a previous chapter we studied the assessment of textile workers' wages by the justices of the peace, and noticed the maximum rates allowed in 1647.¹ During the next hundred years this practice of assessment was continued, but the regulation of woollen workers' wages was soon abandoned. The assessment of 1647 was renewed, without any alteration, up to 1672. In that year a new assessment was drawn up,² in which an all-round increase in wages was permitted, but from which

¹ For a fuller treatment of the assessment of wages in the West Riding, see an article by the present writer in the *Economic Journal*, June 1914.

² *Sessions Order Books*, H. pp. 35-7.

the textile clauses were entirely deleted. There is no mention whatever of the wages which were to be paid to 'Cloathworkers and Dyers', and from this time onwards no assessment was made for this very important section of the community. The reasons for this abandonment are very obscure, and one can only guess what were the motives which induced the justices to remove from their sphere of control so important an industry. It may have been due to the difficulties encountered in revising the rates for textile workers. Time rates had been fixed in 1647, and it may have been that an attempt was now made to convert them into piece rates in accordance with the custom actually in practice in the industry. Such a step would be exceedingly difficult, because of the variety of cloths made in the Riding. A second possibility is that the heads of the clothing trade were averse to any such increase in the textile wages list as was being granted in most of the other occupations. There is no evidence on this point, but one must remember that there was in existence at this time the Corporation of Broad Clothiers, established in the early years of the reign of Charles II. When this organization was brought into being, the statute which incorporated it forbade the Corporation to meddle with wages, or to attempt to 'set or impose any other or lesser Rates of Wages upon any inferior Workmen, Servants or Labourers

than such as shall bee from time to time allowed and approved by the Justices of the Peace in their Quarter Sessions according to the Lawes and Statutes . . . in that case made and provided'.¹ This clause is quite in harmony with the provisions for a minimum rate laid down in the Act of 1603, but it is grotesquely unreal in the light of the maximum figures which were being assessed by the justices. The Corporation was set up in 1662, and in the same year the assessment had been renewed as in 1647, continuing without any alteration until 1672. But now, in the latter year, when the whole schedule was to be revised, there may well have been some searchings of heart amongst clothiers and justices at the manner in which the assessments of maxima for cloth-makers violated the law of 1603 and the clause in the statute of 1662. The justices may have felt somewhat uneasy at their neglect of duty, whilst the Corporation of

¹ Statute 14 Chas. II. c. 32.

The Clothier was probably opposed to any increase in wages, for times were bad and the textile labour market was so overstocked that any number of workpeople could be obtained at the old rates. In the circumstances, it seemed best to leave out entirely the textile workers' wages list, and so from 1672 onwards the wages in the cloth trade were thrown open to individual bargaining. In the eighteenth century the State stepped in and made various enactments for the regulation of the wages to be paid in the industry, and an Act of 1756¹ gave the justices power to fix piece rates for weavers. But all these statutes were practically useless, and did not actually affect the Yorkshire branch of the cloth industry. At the same time there were many enactments to protect the worker from payment in truck, and the various anti-combination laws of the century demanded the proper disbursement of 'full wages . . . agreed . . . in good and lawful money of this Kingdom'.²

But the workman of the eighteenth century did not rely much upon the justices of the peace for an increase in his wages. Workmen were already beginning to be conscious of their class-strength, and were embarking upon experiments in the methods of industrial warfare. Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb have shown, in their early chapters on the history of trade unionism, the growth of organized labour during the eighteenth century, especially in the more capitalistic areas of London, Norfolk, and the West of England. Here the division between master and servant had become complete, with a class of wealthy industrial and commercial magnates on the one hand and a proletariat on the other. Here there were trade unions, strikes, and riots, to say nothing of countless petitions to the King and Commons. These expressions of labour unrest, which were most prevalent during the first third of the century, called forth a series of anti-combination laws which culminated in the Acts of 1799 and 1800, and laid the foundation of that opposition against which trade unionism had to fight throughout the nineteenth century.

The early Acts were aimed specifically at workers in wool,

¹ Statute 20 Geo. II, c. 33. This statute was repealed in the following year (30 Geo. II, c. 12).

² e.g. 12 Geo. I, c. 31; 13 Geo. I, c. 23; 22 Geo. II, c. 27.

and forbade the formation of clubs, societies, and all other forms of combination such as should attempt to regulate the trade, advance wages, and generally help to improve the conditions of employment. Any person entering into such combination was to be sent to prison for three months; any wool-comber or weaver leaving his employment before the termination of the period for which he was engaged was similarly punished, and any workman who should 'damnify, spoil, or destroy . . . any of the goods, wares, or works committed to his charge' was to pay double their value to the owner. Finally, any person or combination of persons who attempted to intimidate or victimize an employer, by endangering his life, or destroying his property, because he refused to comply with any demands made by his workpeople, was to be transported for a period of seven years.¹

Legislation of this type was inspired by the outbursts in the south-western counties, but the north was not free from industrial disturbances during the century. Capitalism was established and developed in the worsted and finishing trades. The worsted trade of Yorkshire was in constant touch with the southern branches of the industry, where the wool-combers were very strongly organized, whilst the cloth-workers of Leeds, living in a town and working in groups, would enjoy that social and industrial intercourse from which springs combination and concerted action. Hence in the cloth finishing and the worsted branches of the industry symptoms of labour unrest presented themselves during the century which preceded the Industrial Revolution. Take, for instance, the two following examples of strikes in Leeds. The first was in 1706, and the heroes were six cloth-drawers employed in that borough. These men banded together and vowed that at a certain day and time they would 'down tools', and thenceforth refuse to work for any person who declined to pay them 1½*d.* an hour, in place of the 1*d.* an hour which was the general rate. Apparently the men fulfilled their promise, and consequently attracted the attention of the judicial authorities of the town. They were brought into court and heavily fined.² In 1743 another body of strikers incurred

¹ Statute 12 Geo. I, c. 34, extended in 22 Geo. II, c. 27.

² *Leeds Gen. Sess. Books* (1706), ii. 300.

... of the guardians of law and order.¹ On this occasion there were three men named, 'and divers other persons as yet unknown', all of them 'workmen and journeymen in the Art, Mystery, or Manual Occupation of a broad Woollen Clothier'. These men were 'not content to work and labour in that art and mystery at the usual rates and prices for which they and their journeymen and workmen were wont and accustomed to work', but were 'falsely and fraudulently conspiring and combining unjustly and oppressively to decrease and augment the wages of themselves and others'. In pursuit of this policy they did on the 24th January . . . at Holbeck, in the Burrough, with force and arms unlawfully, riotously, and tumultuously assemble themselves together, and so being assembled and met, did then and there, with like force and arms in a Warlike manner, unlawfully, riotously, and tumultuously incite, move, and stir up their workmen and journeymen in the said . . . occupation to conspire with them not to make or do their work . . . at any higher or less rate or price than twelve pence for each day's work . . . To the great Terror of his Majesty's Liege Subjects, and to the evil example of all others'. This was evidently a very spirited outbreak; the leaders were seized and brought before the Leeds magistrates, but with what result is unknown.

The cloth-workers were meek as lambs when compared with the worsted workers. The worsted industry had become strongly organized in its southern home, and that organization spread to the north with the establishment of the industry in the West Riding. Time and time again the stuff weavers around Leeds rose in riot and outrage, and attacked some fellow workman who was probably a non-unionist, or struck at the fountain-head and raided the employer's house. Two instances in particular stand out as showing the energy which was put into these concerted attacks on an unpopular employer. In 1770 thirty-two stuff weavers of Leeds, being 'assembled, unlawfully, riotously, and routously, did redeliver and return, unwoven and unmanufactured, unto Joshua Musgrave, 14 lbs. of Worsted Yarn, which by him had been delivered to one John Day, to be woven and manufactured into two pieces of Camblet; then, being gathered together, they did remain and continue together

¹ Ibid. (24th February, 16 Geo. II), v. 239.

in a tumultuous manner for a Space of half an Hour, Shouting and making a great noise and Disturbance, and otherwise greatly misbehaving themselves to the great Disturbance and Terror of diverse of his Majesty's Liege Subjects'; for which expression of their animosity towards the master worsted manufacturer they were fined five shillings each.¹ Two and a half years later 28 worsted workers of Leeds did 'with force and Arms . . . unlawfully . . . assemble and gather together . . . and being so assembled then and there in and upon one John Rider [a master manufacturer of worsteds] in the Peace of God and our said Lord the King . . . did make an assault, and him did beat, wound, and illtreat, so that his life was despaired of, and then did Rioutously, Routously, Wrongfully, and Unjustly break and enter the Dwelling-House of John Rider and did take and carry away 200 pieces of Woollen Stuffs, value £300'.²

The wool-combers, who were the aristocracy of labour in the cloth trade, and who earned the highest wages, were organized in a union which had an almost national constituency. This union was instituted some years before 1741, when it was described in detail by a pamphleteer, who screened his identity behind the pseudonym 'A Lover of his country'.³ The organization evidently began as a friendly society, paying benefits to those who were sick or unemployed, out of funds raised by weekly payments of 2d. or 3d. Gradually the union gained strength, and then commenced to dictate terms to the masters; minimum piece rates were to be fixed for combing, and no master was to employ a non-unionist. If the employer defied the union in these respects, the members refused to work for him until the outsider was dismissed. When a member was out of employment, he was given a ticket and money to enable him to go and seek work elsewhere, and found a welcome amongst fellow-members in other parts of the kingdom. Thus in spite of legislation, this union of wool-combers existed as a highly developed association, resembling in many of its methods the big societies of the following century. How long the club lasted we do not know, but it is certain that throughout the century the wool-

¹ *Leeds Gen. Sess. Records* (28th May, 10 Geo. III), vii. 183-4

² *Ibid.* (1st September, 12 Geo. III), vii. 200.

³ *A Short Essay upon Trade in General*, by 'A Lover of his Country', 1741, quoted by James, *op. cit.*, p. 232

combers of Yorkshire were a strong and stalwart body of men, who stood together for purposes of offence or defence, and were the bane of their employers. Legislation existed which allowed the clothier to indict his workpeople for false spinning, bad workmanship, or embezzlement of materials; and yet the worsted master was so much afraid of the united opposition of the labouring classes that he did not dare to put the law in operation against offenders. It was not until the worsted chiefs were given power to establish what was practically an employers' union, namely the Worsted Committee, that the individual master dare attempt to get his grievances redressed. The wool-combers occasionally demanded increased wages, and, should a master refuse, the three or four combers employed by him declined to continue their work. Such incidents as the following were therefore quite common: In 1777 three journeymen wool-combers were convicted at the Bradford Quarter Sessions 'for keeping up, continuing . . . making, entering into, and being knowingly concerned together at Bowling in a Contract, Agreement, or Combination, contrary to the form of the Statute in the case made and provided, to advance their wages as journeymen woolcombers, and for presuming to put such Contract, Agreement, and Combination into execution, and in consequence thereof refusing to work for reasonable and accustomed wages; . . . [they were] therefore committed to the House of Correction . . . at Wakefield, there to be confined and kept to hard labour for a space of three months.'¹ Again in 1791 the Worsted Committee prosecuted three Halifax wool-combers upon 'a charge of Combination or Conspiracy in raising their Wages'.²

During the later years of the century organized labour became much more powerful in the West Riding. In January 1787 the carpet weavers of Leeds, after a 'turn out' of several weeks, obtained an advance in wages; during this strike there had been much rioting and robbery.³ In 1793 the Corporation of the borough began to feel anxious at the growing industrial unrest, and appointed a committee to consult with the Recorder

¹ *Quarter Sess. Order Books, Bradford*, July 31, 1777, vol. FF, p. 2.

² *Minutes of Worsted Comm.*, January 3, 1791.

³ Mayhall, *Annals of Yorkshire*, i. 166.

'as to the necessary and proper measures to be adopted for the amending and explaining the Acts of Parliament for punishing Servants and Workmen for breach of their contracts, and for preventing combination amongst workmen'.¹ In the previous year the Worsted Committee had looked askance at any extension of liberties for friendly societies, because such societies might have a 'prejudicial Tendency, by enabling the members thereof to form illegal Combinations'.² The Acts of 1799 and 1800 forbade combinations of masters and men alike, but in spite of these Acts labour organizations continued. The evidence before the Commission of 1806 revealed the existence of various societies and unions, which were attempting to keep out non-unionist workmen (or 'snakes' as they were labelled), striving to force up wages, by strikes if necessary, rebelling in sympathy with any of their fellows who might be wrongfully dismissed, and also acting as sick and provident societies. One society, that of the clothworkers, had evidently succeeded in gaining considerable control over that industry. It insisted that no person over fifteen years of age should be taken as apprentice, and a Leeds master finisher in 1806 admitted that he dare not attempt to defy his men in this particular, 'because the men would have left their work'. Another witness tells how he dismissed a man (William Child) because of his advocacy of a union called the 'Institution', and because he spent too much of his time 'going round to persuade men to think as he thought in the villages, endeavouring to make converts, and exhorting the workmen to stand up for their rights'. Strikes were carried on with much bitterness, destruction of property, personal attacks, and vigorous picketing.³

The strange feature about most of these later unions is that they belonged essentially to the eighteenth century, by the way in which they attempted to stamp out the first flames of the Industrial Revolution. With the appearance of machinery many people foresaw the inevitable. The employees and the small clothiers saw clearly that the advent of machinery and the entire abandonment of Tudor legislation would spell ruin for

¹ *Corporation Minutes*, January 28, 1793, iii. 96.

² *Worsted Comm. Minutes*, April 2, 1792.

³ *Reports*, 1806, iii. 15, 36-8, 178, 187, 193, &c.

them. Labour-saving machinery would remove the need for many workmen, and the cost of purchasing and erecting the new machines would mean that only the big clothiers and the merchants would be able to take advantage of the new possibilities. Hence the workmen and small independent clothiers had to fight for their very existence, and many of the unions established between 1780 and 1810 spent their time and energy in trying to stop the flow to the factory. They pleaded for the maintenance of apprenticeship, for the revival of the Act of 1555 which forbade the congregation of machinery into one place, for the prohibition of the use of gigmills, and for the maintenance of all the old and now obsolete safeguards which the flood-tide of *laissez-faire* was sweeping away. When they found there was no help to be obtained from Parliament, they took the law into their own hands, and for the next twenty years fought against machinery wherever it made its appearance. Then came the destruction of looms and spinning jennies, burnings and gunshots, imprisonments, transportation, and executions, but all without avail. The day of little things was past, and the small clothier, the domestic unit, and the little trade union gradually passed out of sight. The next few decades were full of circumstances which militated against unionism, and only since 1914, amid the difficulties created by the Great War, has labour organization become really strong amongst Yorkshire textile operatives.

CHAPTER X

THE PROCESSES OF MANUFACTURE—FROM THE SHEEP'S BACK TO THE CLOTH HALL.

IN the preceding chapters no attempt has been made to describe in detail the various processes through which the wool passed before it became a piece of cloth, ready for the market and the consumer. It now becomes necessary, therefore, to take up this theme, and to make a brief survey of the stages of manufacture as they were carried on in the eighteenth century. In many respects this description applies to all the centuries during which the industry was being practised in Yorkshire, for there had been little development in the industrial arts between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. The implements were almost the same, the treatment of the wool had scarcely altered, and in industrial knowledge the clothier who paid his penny a kersey in the days of the Lancastrian kings was not very much behind his descendants who sold their pieces on Leeds Bridge in the days of Anne. In the intervening period the spinning-wheel had become universal in the North, and new varieties of cloth had been introduced. Many minor improved devices had made the hand-loom easier to work, and the clothiers in the lawsuit of 1638 spoke with pride of the increased efficiency of their methods. Further, during the eighteenth century there was some adoption of better machinery and methods. But the great fact remains that in the four centuries preceding 1760 there was not one tithe of that technical progress which was made in the next half-century. Inventive genius lay almost dormant during those centuries, and did not awaken until the reigns of the Georges.

The reasons for this are not hard to find. Inventive activity is stimulated chiefly by an increased demand from the market. So long as production, jogging along on old-fashioned lines, can meet the demand, there is no powerful stimulus to the discovery of better methods. This was the general situation up to about 1700. A slowly growing demand could be met by traditional

methods of production, thanks to the increase in population. But with the eighteenth century came a largely increased demand for textile goods, in order to cope with which it was necessary to devise some means for accelerated production. Once this had begun in one branch of the industry it spread to others. Quicker weaving called for faster spinning: therefore the flying shuttle made necessary the discoveries of Hargreaves and Crompton, which in turn necessitated further acceleration in the rate of weaving, in order to consume the swollen supply of yarn.

Increased demand is, however, only part of the explanation. The fact that most of the inventions came in the cotton manufacture suggests that in a new industry, free from tradition, technical progress is likely to be more rapid than in older trades. The woollen industry was bound tight in the customs of centuries, and its devotees were therefore loth to venture on new lines. Inventions applying solely to the treatment of wool, e. g. combing machinery, were slow in making their appearance, and even when the big textile inventions had proved their worth in the cotton trade they were adopted very slowly in the West Riding industry. The cotton manufacture, rising in the eighteenth century, had no age-worn creed to fetter its development, and therefore supplied conditions far more favourable to the advancement of industrial methods.

Now let us turn to the processes of manufacture as practised in the eighteenth century, and first we must consider

The Wool Supply

The story of the English wool supply from 1660 to 1825 is one of reiterated but scarcely successful attempts to keep English wool for English looms, and thus deprive foreign workers of their supplies of English fleeces. An Act of Charles II had revived the absolute prohibition on the exportation of the commodity, and this Act, frequently reinforced by subsequent statutes, remained in operation until 1825. William III drew up elaborate plans for patrolling the coast, and appointed inspectors to keep watch for smugglers.¹ The Yorkshire coast was placed under the control of a surveyor, who, aided by eighteen 'riding

¹ Various Acts, e.g. 10 Will. III, c. 40. See also *Memoirs of Wool*, vol. ii, p. 101.

officers,' attempted to suppress illicit exportation from the big ports as well as the tiny creeks.¹ Ingenious schemes were suggested for the detailed registration of all wool immediately it was sheared, for the erection of big bonded warehouses to which all the wool should be brought, for the prohibition of coastwise trade in wool, except by special vessels; and a commission which inquired into the matter in 1732 was advised by some witnesses to recommend that the whole English wool clip should be bought by the State at fixed prices, and then sold to those who needed it under stringent rules concerning its use.² The question was indeed a very pressing one, and the Government was willing to do anything to stop the flow of wool to foreign parts.

In spite of these efforts English fleeces found their way to the Continent. The coasts of Kent and Sussex formed a happy hunting ground for southern smugglers, and on the more deserted northern coasts 'owling' proceeded merrily throughout the eighteenth century. At the same time much wool crossed the Cheviots and passed from Scottish ports across the sea.³ France now took the chief share, especially of long wool needed for making worsteds, of which wools England had large supplies, whilst France had very little. English writers of the period spoke with indignation of the manner in which they had seen English wool landed at Dunkirk, and referred to the places where French and Dutch looms were kept at work by the supplies of raw materials smuggled from England. Dyer lamented the existence of the traitor who would so far sink his patriotism as to carry away supplies of long wool 'to the perfidious foe'.⁴ The Northamptonshire manufacturer-pamphleteer in 1738 waxed angry at the fact that 'we have the misfortune to see among ourselves some who are so base as to contrive all manner of ways and means to owl . . . wool abroad . . . to those who are utter enemies to our interests and happiness'⁵; and the Leeds Corporation in 1742 and 1767 appealed to the House

¹ *Memoirs of Wool*, ii. 67. This was in 1717.

² Add. MSS. 33344, ff. 63 et seq.

³ See *Treasury Papers*, vol. lxxiv, and *passim* 1690-1730.

⁴ *The Fleece*, by John Dyer, LL.D. (1757).

⁵ *Observations on British Wool*, by a Manufacturer of Northamptonshire (1738), p. 2.

of Commons to give its earnest attention 'for the preventing the pernicious practice of running our Wooll from Great Brittain into fforeign Countrys'.¹

During the 'seventies the wool market became somewhat easier. The improved breeding and closer attention now devoted to sheep rearing had increased the production of English wool, whilst the importation from Ireland and other sources was becoming considerable. These factors, along with the slump caused by the American War, brought down the price of wool very quickly. In 1775 the price was 8½d. per lb.; in 1779 it was only 6d.² This severe decline brought the wool-growers to their feet; they were compelled to sell cheaply, and yet they had considerable stocks remaining on their hands. If only they could obtain permission to export the surplus, they would be able to get a good price for the wool abroad. In 1780 and 1781, therefore, an agitation began, especially among the Lincolnshire wool-farmers, to obtain permission to make a limited exportation of English wool, and also to forbid the importation of Irish yarn. In October 1781 a general meeting was held at the castle of Lincoln, where a committee was chosen to prepare petitions to Parliament asking for these favours. Outwardly, the Lincolnshire men seem to have been very moderate in their demands, and did not seek the repeal of the anti-exportation laws. They asked only for licence to export a limited quantity of the surplus wool which the period of depression had left on their hands, and sought for protection against imported supplies which might deprive them of part of their home market. But in a moment the industrial and commercial interests of Yorkshire and East Anglia sprang to arms, as if their very existence was at stake. This insidious proposal of the men of Lincolnshire must be met by the strongest opposition, and the clothing districts set to work to defeat the wishes of the wool-growers. The first big meeting of the woollen manufacturers and merchants was held in Leeds on December 19, 1781, when many resolutions were carried. It was decided that 'the exportation of any sort of wool is injurious, and must be strenuously opposed, and that applications for stopping the importation of Irish yarn

¹ *Corporation Minutes*, ii. 323 and 466.

² Bischoff, *op. cit.*, app. vi.

be resisted'. Two committees, one of merchants, the other of manufacturers, were elected to carry on the campaign. They were to open up correspondence with merchants and manufacturers in other parts of the kingdom, and so rouse general opposition. Lastly, it was decided that since the welfare of the landed interests was thought to be at stake, the assistance and support of the gentry should be sought.

Similar meetings were held at Halifax, Huddersfield, Rochdale, Newcastle, Carlisle, Exeter, Norwich, and in all the East Anglian counties. At all these gatherings the resolutions passed at Leeds were endorsed, or similar ones carried. The High Sheriff and Grand Jury at York in March 1782 declared against the men of Lincolnshire, and the justices of the peace in the West Riding expressed their practical sympathy by granting £100 to help in defraying the expenses of the campaign. The whole clothing interest was in arms against the wool-growers. Some pointed out that although the price had fallen the quantity had increased, and so the growers were really more prosperous, and Arthur Young urged that over-production should be checked by turning some of the pastures into arable land, and by growing hemp or flax under a Government bounty. The men of Lincolnshire stuck to their guns as the national attack concentrated upon them. Delegates from various parts met in conference in London in January 1782 and drew up a monster petition, expressing the abhorrence of the whole industry at the proposals of the wool-growers. Against such united action Lincolnshire could not hope to succeed in gaining what it desired, and when the wool-farmers' requests eventually came before the Commons they were summarily rejected.¹

This failure only urged the wool-dealers to take the risks of illicit trading, and smuggling of wool continued apace. In 1784 42,000 lb. of wool were seized at English ports, but large quantities evaded the vigilance of the customs inspectors. Sometimes the material was carried abroad in bags labelled 'Hops' or the like; at other times small boats, laden with wool, pushed out to sea, and met the ships some distance from port. Few ships in fact left the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire coast

¹ For all the details of this agitation see *Leeds Intelligencer*, 1781-2; also Bischoff, *op. cit.* i, pp. 200-15.

towns without having one or two sacks surreptitiously stowed away in their holds.¹ The merchants and clothiers therefore clamoured for stricter legislation and more rigorous enforcement. The Worsted Committee set the ball rolling, and evidence was given before a Parliamentary Committee by Mr. Charles Clapham of Leeds and Mr. John Hustler, the grand old man of eighteenth-century Bradford, to show the extent to which the home industry was being baffled by the unlawful traffic. The trustees of the cloth halls prosecuted a vigorous campaign, and the West Riding justices gave financial support. These exertions were rewarded by the stringent Act of 1787-8²; by this statute any person concerned directly or indirectly in the exportation of wool was liable to a fine of £3 for every pound weight he had exported, and also to three months' solitary imprisonment for the first offence, and six months for the second, along with the forfeiture of ships, boats, carriages, &c., concerned in the smuggling operations. Regulations were imposed on the carriage of wool from one part of the kingdom to another, and other provisions made to ensure that the foreigner should no longer feed upon English raw materials. When the news arrived that this measure had passed all its stages in both chambers there were great rejoicings and processions of workmen in all the Yorkshire clothing towns. The bells of the churches and cloth halls were rung, speeches and self-congratulations indulged in, and bonfires illumined the skies at dusk.³

As to the exact value of such Acts one can make no accurate estimate. They required an efficient and alert machinery for their enforcement. Popular feeling and commercial interests would aid in the detection of offences, whilst the officials of the Worsted Committee did much to bring culprits into the dock. Still, a dark night, a lonely expanse of coast, and a handful of experienced sea-dogs were sufficient to evade the strictest watch, and smuggling of wool continued. Some cases of detection are recorded, as for instance the following:

1788. Edmund Barker of Thorne was committed for three months to York Castle for exporting wool from Goxhill

¹ *Report of Parl. Committee, 1786, Gen. Coll. Reports, vol. xxxviii, nos. 82-5.*

² 28 Geo. III, c. 38. See also West Riding Quarter Sessions Order Books, III, *passim*.

³ Mayhall, *op. cit.*, i. 170.

in the East Riding to Dunkirk, besides forfeiting all his goods and chattels, and paying £3 for every pound of wool exported.

In the same year three Swedish ships were seized at Hull for smuggling wool out of the kingdom. For a number of years they had been surreptitiously exporting some 1,300 packs annually.¹

1789. Messrs. Hainsworth & Son, Leeds merchants, were found guilty at Appleby Assizes, 'both of illegal package and . . . exportation' of fleeces.²

The home supply of wool was therefore of vital importance to the Yorkshire manufacturer. The wools of the Lincoln and Leicester breeds, with heavy fleeces and long fibres, were the special demand of the worsted weaver, whilst the Yorkshire and other strains supplied the shorter fibres for the woollen cloths. The supply from the Yorkshire sheep was wholly inadequate, and its quality was not sufficiently good for many of the fabrics woven in the county. Until about 1770 no one in Yorkshire had paid serious attention to sheep-breeding, and the average fleece of the sheep reared on the wastes and commons seldom weighed more than 3½ lb. True, this was an improvement on the conditions of the seventeenth century, for Best in his *Rural Economy* (1641)³ says that 'usually six of our ordinary fleeces make a just stone' of 14 lb. Luccock at the end of the eighteenth century allowed one sheep to eight acres, and remarked that the fleeces of Yorkshire sheep were small in weight, very dirty, and generally used in the district where they were produced, never going out of the county.⁴ In the eighteenth century, therefore, as in Stuart times, it was necessary to draw upon the wool supplies of other counties, and the southern parts of England supplied large quantities of raw material for

¹ Mayhall, *op. cit.*, i. 163.

² *Ibid.*, i. 167. Also *Gentleman's Magazine*, September 1789, p. 855.

³ *Rural Economy of Yorkshire*, by Best (1641); *Surtees Soc.*, vol. xxxiii, p. 24. See A. Young, *Northern Tour*, *passim*.

⁴ Luccock, *Observations on British Wool* (1800), p. 323. When attention began to be paid to the improvement of sheep the fleece increased in weight from 3½ lb. to 7 or 10 lb. (see Young's *Northern Tour*). A story is told of a moorland shepherd who, when asked by Sir John Sinclair how many sheep he allowed to the acre, replied, 'Why man, ye begin at t'wrang end first. Ye should ax how many acres to a sheep' ('Essay on farming of West Riding', by Charnock, *Journal of Royal Soc.*, lx. 300).

the Yorkshire looms. Further, foreign supplies were being drawn upon to a much greater degree during the century. In 1752 Yarmouth and Lancaster were opened as ports for Irish wool and yarn,¹ through which new supplies of raw and semi-manufactured materials flowed into East Anglia and the West Riding. Additional stocks were obtained from the southern counties of Scotland,² and in 1766 nearly 2,000,000 lb. of wool were imported, chiefly from Ireland, Spain, Portugal, and Saxony.³

The wool, when shorn from the sheep's back, might be sold in a number of ways. In the first place, clothiers and wool-staplers made annual excursions to the wool-farms, and purchased part or the whole of the year's clip. Secondly, many wool-buyers, especially the large clothiers and wool-staplers, made contracts to purchase the whole yield of a farm for a number of years. Thirdly, the wool-grower, instead of waiting for buyers to come to the farm, might bring his wool to the fair or market, and there dispose of it. All three courses had their adherents. The visit to the farm was a recognized method of purchase: long-period contracts were common, and the big wool markets and fairs of Guisborough, Beverley, and Wakefield, or the smaller meetings at Dent, Bedale, and similar market towns, were great events in the life of the district and the county. The greatness of the Beverley wool sales was now a thing of the past, whilst Wakefield had stepped forward rapidly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and was now the great wool market of the clothing area. Growers and dealers in Lincolnshire and other counties forwarded their wool to Wakefield, where it was sold by agents and staplers to the clothiers of the surrounding districts.

The wool-stapler, described in the *London Tradesman* (1757) as the 'Sheet-Anchor of Great Britain', is worthy of a moment's attention. He was the descendant of the Merchants of the Staple and the broggers who were so abominated in the sixteenth century. The Merchants of the Staple had developed an internal trade in wool as their foreign trade declined, and now, although

¹ Statute 25 Geo. II, cc. 14 and 19.

² Adam Smith, *op. cit.*, II. v. 281-2.

³ Hobson, *Evolution of Modern Capitalism*, p. 63.

the society was dead, the wool-stapler survived,¹ and was, according to Defoe, 'a very important and considerable sort' of tradesman in the eighteenth century.² Success in the business required a large amount of capital, £1,000 to £10,000 being the sum regarded as necessary for setting up as a master in the trade in London.³ The stapler was to be found in every part of the kingdom where wool was produced or required. His business was to buy and collect large quantities of wool from varied sources. Hustler, one of the most famous Bradford staplers, declared to the House of Lords in 1800 that he was accustomed to buying wool himself from nineteen counties, whilst his partner and agents made purchases in at least another fourteen.⁴ On the farm or in the market squares he made his purchases, which he then carried away, by land or by water, to his head-quarters, a warehouse in the heart of the clothing district. Here the wool was cleaned, sorted, and classified according to its qualities and the uses to which it was to be put. Thence to the market stall, where the various clothiers came to purchase their supplies, large or small. Every manufacturing town had its market, where the manufacturer who could not journey to the East Riding to buy a hundred fleeces was able to procure his two or three stones of wool, the raw material for a week's work. The wool-stapler allowed a certain measure of credit, a facility of which most clothiers availed themselves.

'A wooll seller knows a wooll buyer' is an old Yorkshire proverb, but if it was intended to indicate that the two were

¹ A paper, temp. Car. I (*D. S. P.*, vol. 515, f. 130), states the nature of the staplers' internal trade. They bought wool, sorted it into long or short and then subdivided each kind into four or five qualities. Each class was then taken to the particular district where it was needed. 'And divers places, as in York-shire and at Oswestree, where there dwell many clothiers that make course cloth, rugs, course cottons and flannels, and use onely course sorts of wooll, buy these sorts of wooll of the staplers, ready sorted.'

² Defoe, *Complete Tradesman*, 1841 edition, ii. 188-9.

³ *London Tradesman*, by R. Campbell (1757), pp. 199 and 340. The description given there reads as follows: 'He is the first Man into whose Hands that valuable Branch of our Trade, the Wool comes. He buys it up from the Farmer, and keeps large Warehouses in Town to receive it. He makes it up into several Sortments fit for the Manufacturers. It is a very profitable Branch, but cannot be enter'd upon with little Money.'

⁴ *Minutes of Evidence before the House of Lords, relating to the Woollen Manufacture* (1800), p. 80. Another wool-stapler declared that he bought wool in thirteen counties. He made four journeys annually into nine counties, and an annual tour of four other counties; p. 94.

matched for shrewdness it seems, like most proverbs, to be only partially true. Throughout the century there were numerous complaints that the buyer was being duped and deceived by the seller. To such a pitch did this rivalry of wits attain that widespread agitations were carried on in 1751-2, which brought about the passage of remedial legislation for the evils cited. A short extract from the petition of 1752 will best explain the whole story. The petitioners stated that 'in order to distinguish each grower's sheep feeding on common lands, it has been the ancient custom to put a mark of pitch or tar and other ingredients, capable of enduring the severities of the weather, upon some conspicuous part of the sheep; but of late years they have in many places loaded the fleece . . . with such excessive quantities of marking stuff, in order to increase its weight, that the manufacture has been rendered universally difficult and often unprofitable; that in order to make it workable the manufacturer is obliged to clip off with the mark as much wool as occasions a very great waste of that valuable commodity . . . and notwithstanding the greatest attention of the most careful manufacturers, the marking stuff is wrought into the goods of all sorts, which, when finished, are so spotted and stained thereby that their value and credit are greatly impaired at home and abroad.' The clothiers also complained 'that in all parts of the kingdom the wool-growers, in order to increase the weight and enhance the price of the wool, permit to be wound up, in the fleece, wool of inferior qualities, as tail wool, unwashed wool, lamb wool, etc., and also clay, stones, dung, sand, and other rubbish, to the inconceivable loss and deceit of the manufacturers, several of whom have found a total loss of one-fifteenth of the weight they bought; . . . in truth they now find very few parcels of wool fairly wound and free from brands'.¹ The petitioners were unanimous in condemnation of such practices, and legislation at once made provision for the

¹ Petitions came from all parts of the country. See the list of towns in the previous chapter. Dyer also speaks of the practice of applying pitch *The Fleece*, Book ii, 564:

Way will ye joy in common fields, where pitch
Noxious to wool must stain your motley flock,
To mark your property? The mark dilates,
Enters the flake depreciated, defiled,
Unfit for beauteous tint

punishment of offenders—a very desirable step when one considers the extent to which such frauds must have hindered a manufacture which knew little or nothing of the use of chemicals in washing and cleaning wool.¹

Manufacture

We now follow the wool through the various processes, until it passes to the cloth market. Where the fleece had been bought whole and unsorted it was necessary to classify the locks, and set them aside, as long or short, good or inferior.

In the same fleece, diversity of wool
Grows intermingled, and excites the care
Of curious skill, to sort the several kinds.
Nimble, with habitual speed,
They sever lock from lock, and long from short,
And soft and rigid pile in several heaps.²

The short wool was laid aside by those engaged in the worsted industry, and when augmented by the short fibres brought out in combing was sold to the woollen manufacturers, who used only short-staple wool.

After sorting the wool must be cleaned, and, if necessary, dyed, before being worked up into a thread. If the cloth was to be a 'mixed' (i. e. a dyed) fabric, the wool, after being washed, scoured, and cleared of dirt, burrs, twigs, &c., was dyed. The clothier had a small dyeing vat of lead, which sometimes stood outside his door, and occasionally was located in a 'dye house' attached to his cottage. Here the wool was dyed, frequently on primitive lines, and the resulting colour was often far from pleasant. Luccock waxed scornful over the methods and results of dyeing, and concluded his indictment as follows: 'But indeed what can we expect but faint, muddy, and uncertain colours, where wool is dyed, as is too much the custom in Yorkshire, without being scoured, in pans unwashed, and with materials mixed together upon a floor unswept, where a little before perhaps have been mixed ingredients calculated to produce a totally different tint'.³ Not all wool was dyed,

¹ Before 1752, prosecutions are often recorded of fraudulent wool-dealers, e. g. *North Riding Sess. Rec.*, vii. 219, Thurske, 1700: 'A Harriby yeoman for selling 160 fleeces of wool with certain tails and other deceptive locks.'

² Dyer, *op. cit.*, ii. 504.

³ Luccock, *op. cit.*, p. 172. Luccock lived in Leeds, and knew the Yorkshire industry well.

for a large proportion of the wool was woven into white cloths, and consequently was not dyed until after the cloth had been made.¹

The wool, whether white or dyed, was now sprinkled with oil and placed layer upon layer on the floor, each layer being sprinkled with oil; the whole mass was then tossed about, beaten with sticks, and thoroughly mixed up and permeated with the oil, so as to facilitate subsequent processes. Then came the distinction between the two kinds of wool—the short staple for woollens went to be carded, the long staple for worsteds to be combed. The carding was intended to work the wool into a fluffy mass of inseparable fibres, prior to spinning. Hand cards were used, and consisted of two boards fitted with handles, and covered on one side with wire teeth set in leather. A handful of the wool was placed between the boards, which were then brought close together, and worked about in every direction, especially in a circular motion. Thus the wool was mixed into a sheet of interlaced fibres, ready for spinning. Paul had invented some carding machinery in 1748, but the invention did not become generally adopted until improved by Lees and Arkwright in the 'seventies.

Wool-combing, as indicated in an earlier chapter, aimed at extricating the short fibres, laying the long ones in parallel lines, and clearing the wool of knots and foreign substances. The implements of the hand wool-comber were few and simple, consisting of

1. A pair of combs on handles. Each comb might contain from three to eight rows of teeth, which along with the handle formed an implement shaped like a T. The teeth in the outside row might be up to eleven inches in length, those in the inner rows becoming shorter with each row.

2. A post, to which one of the combs could be fixed on a peg or pad.

3. An iron comb-pot or stove, for heating the teeth of the comb and warming the wool. This heating was necessary to keep the fibres as soft, flexible, and elastic as possible, and the combs were constantly being reheated.

¹ The description of the processes is taken from Luccock, who is followed by James. Two admirable pamphlets on *Hand Card-making* and *Hand-combing* have been written by Mr. H. Ling Roth, of Bankfield Museum, Halifax.

The actual procedure differed from district to district, and there were many variations in the West Riding itself.¹ According to one account, the workman took a tress of wool about four ounces in weight, sprinkled it with oil, and rolled it in his hands to get all the filaments properly oiled. He then fastened a heated comb to the post, with the teeth in a horizontal position. Taking half the tress, he threw it on to the teeth, and pulled it through repeatedly, leaving a few fibres each time on the comb. When he had in this manner treated all the wool in his hands, he placed the loaded comb on or near the stove to warm while the second comb was similarly employed on the other half of the tress. The two combs were then taken by the handles and worked contrariwise through the wool, until one comb had taken it all on to its teeth. In some instances the comber sat on a low stool for this last process, working the combs on his knees: in others, one comb was fixed to the post. The long fibres were now gently pulled off the comb by hand, the short ones remaining on the butts of the teeth. A variation of this method was to throw the wool on to a comb attached to the post, and work it off on to the second comb, after which it was worked back on to the original comb. In the nineteenth century it was customary in the Bradford and Halifax area for combers to wash the wool after the first combing, and then repeat the whole process. The long fibres drawn from the comb by hand were called 'tops': the short ones which remained on the teeth were known as 'noils'. The former went to the worsted makers, the latter to the woollen.

Wool-combing was admitted to be the most unhealthy branch of the trade. The work was done near the charcoal stove, which filled the room with noxious fumes. One writer, reporting on the health of the industrial towns in 1845, gave a ghastly picture of the effects of wool-combing under domestic conditions. 'The workpeople are obliged to keep their windows open in all weathers, to prevent or to mitigate the evil effects of the gas. They are roasted to perspiration on one side, and often have a current of cold air rushing upon them from the window. They look pale

¹ For details of the various methods see James, *op. cit.*, pp. 249 et seq., or Burnley, *Wool and Wool-combing* (1889), pp. 88-90; the best description of the implements and their use is found in Roth, *Hand Wool-combing*, Halifax, 1909. This pamphlet of ten pages is profusely illustrated.

and cadaverous, few reaching fifty years of age. Their roasting employment and exposure to the gas gives them a desire for spirits and opiates.¹ The writer on the woollen manufacture in Ure's *Dictionary of Arts, Manufactures, and Mines* (1861 edition) declared that hand-combing was far more severe labour than any carried on by machinery, because of the hot close atmosphere of the combing-room; hence he wrote 'This is a task at which only robust men are engaged.'² Of course there was the open country, the fresh air, and the patch of ground outside. The comber was able to earn good wages if he worked regularly, but the work was hard, and the comber seldom did work regularly. He took occasional holidays, often drinking heavily; he spent some time tending his garden,³ or occasionally participated in a strike. But all these things did little to counteract the effects of the monotonous work and the charcoal fumes.

The wool, whether carded or combed, was now ready for spinning. This might be done by the wife and children of the small woollen clothier, or by the people living in the vicinity. But the entire population of the clothing area was insufficient for producing an adequate supply of yarn, and much of the wool was therefore taken far afield in Yorkshire and into the adjoining counties. James gives an instance of a clothier, residing at Otley, who put out his wool to be spun in Cheshire and North Derbyshire.⁴ The manufacturers of Bradford and Halifax forwarded large quantities of raw material to Craven, the North Riding, and Lancashire. This carriage of wool from place to place was a prominent feature of the industry, and was inevitable so long as population was dispersed. The Otley manufacturer mentioned above bought his wool at York or Wakefield, and brought it 25 miles along the worst of roads to Askwith, near Otley. Here it was sorted, given out to be combed, and returned to the master's head-quarters: it then went to Cheshire to be spun, was returned to Askwith, and again handed out to be woven. Finally, the cloth went to Colne

¹ *Health of Towns Commission*, 1845. Report on cottage combers of Bradford; Yorkshire section, p. 19.

² Ure, *op. cit.*, iii. 1045. See also Roth, *Hand Wool-combing*, p. 10.

³ At Heaton, near Bradford, there were certain gardens to which the name of 'Wool-combers' Gardens' still clung in the later nineteenth century.

⁴ James, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

market to be sold. Yarn prepared in the Leeds and Bradford areas had formerly been sent to Norfolk; waste silk from London was washed, combed, and spun at Kendal, and then returned to be woven at Spitalfields. All this meant the employment of 'a prodigious number of people, horses, carts or wagons', and a waste of time almost inconceivable. There can have been little speeding up in the old form of industry, when one man's business covered a whole county.

The wool was taken these long distances on the backs of pack-horses, and when it reached its destination was usually deposited with some agent, whose business it was to distribute the work over the countryside. The agent was sometimes a farmer or shopkeeper; but a great part of this distribution was apparently done by women, who augmented their earnings as spinners by the commission of one halfpenny per pound paid for putting out and collecting the wool.¹ When the spinning was being done by those who lived near the clothier, the spinner came to his employer's warehouse for the supply of wool. Spinning was done on the old distaff or on the single-thread spinning wheel. The former was still retained to some extent in East Anglia, but in the West Riding it had entirely disappeared, and the spinning wheel was a common feature in the equipment of almost every Yorkshire home. When the inventions of Wyatt and Paul were introduced about the middle of the century they met with some little favour, but until the 'nineties the bulk of the yarn for the Yorkshire looms was prepared by the spinning wheel. The work was largely carried on by the female members of the family or by the children. The employment of the youngest children was general, the parents being only too pleased to get their children to work, augmenting the family income by one or two shillings a week. Industrial schools and workhouses throughout the century devoted much of their time to teaching children the arts of 'scribbling' or mixing wool,² and spinning.³ Defoe, Young, and other writers noted

¹ James, *op. cit.*, pp. 311-12. See chap. xii, section on Worsted Committee, for notices of female distributing agents.

² Dodsley's *Description of Leeds* (1764); manuscript transcript in Leeds Reference Library.

³ Poulson, *Beverlac*, p. 796. There were also in existence schools to which children went to be taught spinning.

with pleasure and satisfaction the prevalence of the practice of employing small children in these branches of the industry.

Around the spinning wheel has centred the Arcadian conception of eighteenth-century bliss ; but, like most popular opinions as to the charm of the 'good old times', it must be taken with a great deal of caution. Southey spoke of 'contentment spinning at the cottage door', and James had it on the authority of an old villager that the women and children of Bradford Vale used to flock on sunny days with their spinning wheels to some favourite pleasant spot, to pursue the labours of the day, though, James adds silyly, 'these spinners in the sun were not free from the vice imputed to their grand-daughters of the modern tea-table'.¹ But even assuming that the spinners at the cottage door or on the village green were the embodiment of contentment, and that fine sunny days were more frequent in the eighteenth century than they are to-day, the system was full of faults and imperfections, and open to one or two serious objections. In the first place, this employment of the housewife must have meant a grave neglect of domestic duties, or a very heavy additional demand upon her energies, if she was to be a wage-earner and also a housekeeper. Washing, baking, cleaning, &c., must have been relegated to odd moments and evenings, and the woman must have had even less opportunity for rest and recreation than she has to-day. To see what this meant, one has only to observe the state of affairs in the twentieth century in those households where the wife spends her days in the mill, and discharges her domestic duties before or after factory hours.

Secondly, the employment of young children was open to grave abuses. 'Scarcely anything above four years old, but its hands were sufficient for its own support', said Defoe, and the part played by children in the eighteenth-century industry was quite important. The gross earnings of children under ten years of age must have been very considerable, and formed an integral part of the family income. But at what a cost ! We to-day know the price which has been paid in lives and health by the cut-time system, and there is no reason to suppose that the employment of even younger children in the eighteenth century

¹ James, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

took a less heavy human toll. True, the work may have been light and the hours short, but even that is very doubtful. Yorkshiremen, either from thoughtlessness or necessity, have seldom spared their children, and one cannot doubt that many young workers were kept at tasks beyond their strength for long hours daily, to the ruining of their health and general physique.

The methods of spinning employed during the early part of the century were still primitive, and involved a great proportion of manual labour. Progress was slow, and the spinner could do little more than 1 lb. per day. Hence, although the industry was so widely scattered and every available person employed at the work, the supply of yarn was inadequate to meet the needs of the weavers. The proportion of spinners to weavers was now greater than in the sixteenth century,¹ due apparently to some acceleration in the speed of weaving. In 1715 it was stated that 7 combers and 25 weavers employed 250 spinners, i.e. 1 comber to 35 spinners and 1 weaver to 10 spinners.² Other estimates allowed 9 spinners to each weaver,³ and even when spinning had been accelerated by the use of hand jennies in the latter part of the century the work of one weaver consumed the yarn produced by four spinners. The early figures may include a number of children, but even if this was so it would be very difficult for the clothiers to procure a steadily increasing supply of yarn as the industry grew in size. Old and young were employed, and yet the supply of yarn was inadequate. The scarcity was accentuated when the adoption of the flying shuttle made weaving so much more rapid, and thus the weaver was often compelled to remain idle for a day or two because he could not secure a supply of yarn. In these circumstances it was essential that some means should be devised for the acceleration of the process of spinning, and the first great inventions following Kay's shuttle were concerned with the spinning of yarn.

The supply of yarn was insufficient. Further, the quality of the produce varied considerably. The shopkeeper was not quite

¹ See Chapter III, section on Journeymen.

² *Great Britain's Glory*, by Haynes (1715), pp. 8-9.

³ *The Weavers' True Case*, by a practical weaver, 1720; Smith's *Memoirs of Wool*, vol. ii.

the most suitable man for giving out work to the best spinners only, or for remonstrating with those who did faulty work. He would not offend the most incapable spinster by refusing to give her work, so long as she was a good customer at his counter. The employment of children was a cause of imperfect workmanship, and the clothier had to pay for the tuition of his future workpeople in uneven and badly spun threads. Also, it was wellnigh impossible to secure uniformity of yarn. The clothier asked for a definite standard when giving out the wool to be spun, but the tendency would be for each house and each spinner to vary a little in the thickness and firmness of the yarn; some sent in 'hard twisted', others 'soft twisted', and it was very difficult to reduce the work to one standard.¹ Thus in irregularity, inadequacy, and inequality of supply the domestic system of spinning was rapidly becoming more and more unsuited to the needs of the times. It must vanish as soon as new possibilities were discovered, and hence we find that spinning was amongst the first processes to be absorbed in a factory system, where machinery and power could cope with the needs of the loom.

The yarn, when spun, was returned to the local centre, packed up, and forwarded to the clothier. Should he be catering for the looms of some southern field, the packs were dispatched to East Anglia, Gloucestershire, or elsewhere.² If the master utilized the yarn himself, he handed it out to his weavers, who wove it into a piece in his loom-shop or in their own homes. The small clothier gathered up the yarn produced for him by the labours of his family or neighbours, and set to work to weave the cloth with his own hands. The loom was prepared and the warp inserted in a very primitive manner, especially if we can accept Dyer's description as being at all representative:

And now [the weaver] strains the warp
Along the garden walk or highway side,
Smoothing each thread; now fits it in the loom
And sits before the work.³

¹ *Reminiscences of an Octogenarian*, by Hall, printed in James, *op. cit.*, p. 312. To express it in technical terms, some spun to 16 hanks per pound, others to 24 hanks. When the manufacturer got his yarn back it had to be sorted, and the hard yarn used for warp, the soft for weft.

² The witnesses in 1806 referred to the sale of North Country yarn in Gloucestershire and other parts.

³ Dyer, *op. cit.*, iii. 570.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the loom was still comparatively simple in design. It was little more than a box-like framework, fitted with rollers, healds, and treadles. The village carpenter often served as loom constructor, though in the more populous clothing areas loom-makers were to be found. It was then placed in the loom-shop, if such a structure was attached to the house; otherwise, it found a resting-place in the least inconvenient quarter of the home. Prior to the adoption of the flying shuttle, the weaving of narrow pieces was effected by passing the shuttle from hand to hand through the divided warp threads. This method had marked limitations and many faults. It was slow, clumsy, irregular, and required that the weaver should work leaning over the fabric, a position very detrimental to health. The weaving of broad cloths presented a still greater difficulty, since these pieces were of such a width as to render it impossible for one man to weave them. Dyer gives one of his most idyllic pen-pictures to a description of the method adopted.

Or if the broader mantle be the task,
He choseth some companion to his toil.
From side to side with amicable aim
Each to the other darts the nimble bolt,
While friendly converse, prompted by the work,
Kindles improvement in the opening mind.¹

The weaving was apparently merely an *obligato* accompaniment to the elevation of two kindred spirits by mutual intercourse.

This slow and cumbrous procedure was ended by the adoption of Kay's 'flying shuttle'. Kay devised the idea of mounting the shuttle on four small wheels, which would enable it to run from side to side of the loom when knocked by hammers, of wood or leather, worked by cords held in the hand of the weaver. The new contrivance was slow in finding a place in the textile world. It was first made public in 1733,² and roused the fiercest enmity in East Anglia and Lancashire. It appears to have found a better reception on the eastern side of the Pennines, where it solved the difficulty of weaving broad cloths. Hence it seems that a number of Yorkshiremen began to make use of the invention, in a manner which drew from Kay the

¹ Dyer, *op. cit.*, iii. 570-1.

² Patent no. 542, May 26, 1733.

following announcement in the *Leeds Mercury*, August 27, 1737:

'Whereas John Kay of Bury . . . having obtained a patent for his new invented shuttle for weaving of broad cloths, and dyvers clothiers within the West Riding . . . have made use of the said shuttle without the lycense of the said John Kay, contrary to the prohibition in the said patent, This is to give notice that if any person will come to Mr. John Lazenby in Leeds, and lodge an information against a sufficient number of clothiers, &c.'

A reward was promised, and no divulgence was to be made of the informant's name. Whether or not the reward was claimed is unknown, but in the following year Kay came to Leeds and began a series of lawsuits against the offenders. The weavers refused to pay royalty, and formed a shuttle club which fought Kay, making the lawsuits so protracted that the inventor was ruined by legal expenses, and in 1745 he was compelled to flee from the town before the anger of his opponents.¹ From the evidence given in 1806 we learn that the flying shuttle was not really extensively used in Yorkshire until about 1760-70,² and many of the older men who appeared before the Parliamentary Committee in that year could remember the day when narrow cloths were woven by throwing the shuttle from hand to hand, and wider cloths required two men, or a man and a boy, to make them. Even when the improvement had been adopted, the loom was still limited in its scope. Its motions were heavy and cumbrous, as any one will quickly realize by examining and experimenting upon the few hand-loom which have survived. Fancy patterns could only be woven slowly and at great expense, and the rate of weaving ordinary cloths was far from rapid until later inventions had increased the speed at which the loom could work, strengthened the shuttle thread, and applied other than manual power.

The weaving suffered from frequent interruptions, due, in the first place, to a shortage of yarn. Then there were the breaks occasioned by taking the pieces to the clothier's head-quarters, the fulling mill, or the market, as well as those which occurred

¹ Swire Smith, *Manufacture of Textile Fabrics*, printed for private circulation, p. 4. See also Mantoux, *La Révolution industrielle* (1906), p. 199.

² *Reports*, 1806, iii, pp. 81, 128, 166.

in the harvest and haymaking seasons,¹ when men, women, and children tramped away to the fields of the Vale of York, the East Riding, Lincolnshire, and Nottinghamshire, to assist in gathering in the harvest.

Next from the slackened beam the wool unroll'd
Near some clear gliding river, Aire or Stroud,
Is by the noisy fulling mill received,
Where tumbling waters turn enormous wheels,
Where hammers, rising and descending, learn
To imitate the industry of man.
Of the wet web is steeped, and often raised,
Fast dripping, to the river's grassy banks,
And sinewy arms of men, with full strained strength,
Wring out the latent water. Then up hung
On rugged tenters to the fervid sun,
Its level surface reeking, it expands,
Still brightening in each rigid discipline,
And gathering worth.²

Such is Dyer's description of the next processes, milling or fulling, and tentering. The piece, when taken from the loom, was laid upon the floor, treated with various evil-smelling liquids and pigments, and trampled under foot, in order to remove the bareness of the web, and mat together the warp and weft. The odour which emanated from the cloth after receiving this treatment must have been revolting, for dung, manure, &c., were often ingredients of the pigments. May in 1613 referred to 'the Scent of these Northern dozens',³ and Mr. Sykes in his history of Huddersfield remarks on the continuance of the practice in the eighteenth century.⁴ The cloths were then taken to the nearest fulling mill, in some cases a considerable distance away. Here the piece was 'scoured' with fuller's earth, treated with soap, and beaten with heavy hammers or 'stocks' (worked by a water wheel or horse gin), in order to wash out the impurities, grease, &c., and thicken the fabric by shrinking and 'felting' together the fibres of wool. It was finally washed in the river, to get rid of the soap and fuller's earth, and, after being measured and stamped by the inspector,

¹ Bigland, *Topogr. and Hist. Description of the County of York* (1812), p. 612; also James, *op. cit.*, p. 312.

² Dyer, *op. cit.*, iii. 570.

³ May, *op. cit.*, p. 21 et seq.

⁴ Sykes, *Huddersfield and its Vicinity*, pp. 78-9.

was taken back home, or to some place where the clothier had the use of tenters.

Before leaving the topic of mills and milling, it might be appropriate to note a curious point which arose about 1739. During the second quarter of the century the output of cloth was increasing, and consequently the work of the fuller grew heavier. The clothiers were busy, and they kept the mill-men equally so. When time was so precious, it seemed a pity to waste it by relinquishing industrial pursuits on the Sabbath. The clothier's conscience might not allow him to weave on that day, and the journeyman would rather enjoy his weekly rest. But there was nothing to prevent the clothier from doing something, or rather from inducing some other person to do something for him. Hence it was represented to the Quarter Sessions at Pontefract in 1739 that 'it is, and for many years last past, hath been a common Practice to mill Narrow Cloth upon Sundays, and that the Clothmakers are now arrived to such a Scandalous and Shocking Degree of prophaning the Sabbath this way, that they even contrive to bring more cloths to be milled upon the Sunday than any other day, Whereby both Masters and Servants are guilty of a public Neglect of the Holy Duties of the day, and by certain Consequence are insensibly drawn into the Commission of all manner of Sin and Wickedness, To the great displeasure of Almighty God, the Scandal of the Kingdom, the Evil Example of their Neighbours, and the breach of all Laws, both divine and human'. For prevention of such enormities in future, it was ordered that 'no Millman of narrow woollen cloth shall wet, stamp, or put any cloth into his Mill after 12 of the Clock on Saturday Night, or before 12 on Sunday Night, on pain to forfeit his Salary' for the milling of such cloths. The justices of the peace were requested to be very vigilant in the detection of offenders, and to punish all clothiers, or their servants, who should take cloths to the mill on Sunday, or indeed engage in any kind of textile occupation on that day.¹

From the mill the cloth went to the tenter frame, on which the cloth was stretched, and its dimensions were increased by fixing one end and one side, and by fastening a movable beam to the other edge, as well as by pulling at the free end.

¹ Quarter Sessions Order Books, U, p. 141, Pontefract, May 1, 1739.

The cloth was attached to the beams by tenter-hooks, and then left for a day or two to dry and assimilate itself to its stretched proportions; after that it was ready for the market. The piece would still be rough and unkempt; the white cloth would have to be dyed and finished before it was ready for the tailor, and the mixed woollen cloth had still some processes to undergo. The worsted piece was not full'd at all, but it still required much attention after weaving before it was ready to be made into garments.

With the cloth ready for the market we leave the cottage system of manufacture. We have followed the material through its various stages, and seen the family at work; but yet there is much that we do not know about the real nature of the workaday life of these people. Thoresby's antiquarian writings do not give it us, and even Defoe's masterly pen left much unwritten. Perhaps the following extracts from a poem, written about 1730, will serve to give us a more intimate picture of family life and labour. The poem is 'descriptive of the Manners of the Clothiers',¹ and is written in a style at once intimate and colloquial. The scene is situated 'some hundred yards from Leeds, crowded with . . . industrious breeds' of merry clothiers, amongst whose 'greasy throng' of workpeople the writer finds himself. The day begins early with breakfast of oaten cakes (the famous 'Havercake'), milk, and porridge. After which all get away to work,

And through the Web the Shuttle throw.
Thus they keep time with hand and feet
From five at morn till eight at neet.²

Their wooden clogs, the whirr of the spinning wheel, and the constant chatter make a continuous hum throughout the day. Then, at eight in the evening, the workers are summoned by the housewife, and having washed themselves gather round the supper table. Whilst the meal is in progress, the master addresses his family, apprentices, and journeymen.

Lads, work hard I pray,
Cloth mun be peaked next Market day.³

¹ The only copy of this poem which I have encountered is a manuscript copy in the Leeds Reference Library. It is bound up in a volume of Miscellanea, entitled 'Matters of Interest'.

² i.e. night.

³ i.e. 'must be peaked', or examined to see that there are no holes or faults in the piece

And Tom mun go to-morn to t'spinners,
 And Will mun seek about for t'swingers,
 And Jack, tomorn by time be rising,
 And go to t'sizing mill for sizing.¹
 And get your web and warping done
 That ye may get it into t'loom.
 Joe, go give my horse some corn,
 For I design for t'Wolds tomorn
 So mind and clean my boots and shoon,
 For I'll be up i' t'morn right soon.
 Mary,—there's Wool—tak thee and dye it.

Here is an admirable picture of a master clothier employing his own family and one or two others, probably apprentices, in his own house, and a number of spinners in the neighbourhood. He sets out for the Wolds to buy wool, but, before going, gives detailed orders to his assistants, and instructs his wife Mary to proceed with the dyeing of wool. At this order Mary begins to protest against being expected to do textile work as well as housework, and we get from her lips the very objection which we raised above against the employment of women in spinning, &c.

Mistress. So thou's setting me my wark.

I think I'd more need mend thy sark.²
 Prithee, who mun sit at bobbin wheel,
 And ne'er a cake at top o' th' creel,³
 And me to bake and swing and blend,
 And milk, and barns to school to send,
 And dumplings for the lads to mak,
 And yeast⁴ to seek, and syk as that;
 And washing up, morn, noon, and neet,
 And bowls to scald and milk to fleet,
 And barns to fetch again at neet.

To which forcible statement of objections the husband replies in the strain of 'Business is business'.

Master. When thou begins thou's never done!

Bessy and thee mun get up soon,
 And stir about and get all done;
 For all things mun aside be laid,
 When we want help about our trade.

¹ Sizing used to treat warp with, to strengthen it before putting into loom.

² Sark = shirt.

³ Creel = the wooden framework hung near the roof, on which clothes and cakes of oat bread were hung to dry.

⁴ Yeast for baking, and probably for brewing herb beer and other drinks which are still consumed in the Riding. 'Syk' = such.

Those last two lines sum up the whole situation, and against them further protest is useless. The wife therefore resignedly remarks :

Why Bairn, we'll see what we can do,
But we have both to wesh and brew,
And shall want Malt, Hops, Soap, and Blue,
And thou'll be most a week away,
And I's hev t'wark folk to pay.

Master. Let paying for their wark alone,
I'll pay 'em all when I come home.
Keep t'lads at wark, and take this purse,
And set down wha thou dost disburse.

By this time supper is over, and the wife suggests to her husband,

Come, let us go to Joe's,
To talk and hear how matters goes.

As the two go out, other young people come in from neighbouring houses, and the merry party sits round the fire, drinking, smoking, laughing, and telling stories and jokes connected with the work of the day, its accidents and humours.

Thus they do themselves well please
With telling such like tales as these,
Or passing of a merry joke,
Till ten gives warning by the clock,
Then up they start—to bed they run,
Maister and Dame home being come.
They sleep secure until the horn
Calls 'em to work betimes i' th' morn.
Ere clock strikes eight they're call'd to Breakfast
And bowls of milk are brought in great haste.
Good Water-Pudding,¹ as heart could wish
With spoons stuck round an earthen dish.
Maister gives orders to all in full,
Sets out to t'Wolds to buy his wool,
And while the good man is away,
The neighbour wives all set a day
To meet and drink a disa of tea
With Dame while she is left a Widow.

And so the poem ends with a vivid picture of this 'At Home', and the neighbouring women indulging that propensity which is known to-day as 'calling', with the 'ca' pronounced as in 'cat'.

¹ Probably oatmeal porridge

The horn referred to a few lines from the end was an antecedent of the later whistle or 'buzzer'. Horn-blowing was practised at Bramley, Ossett, Yeadon, Otley, and probably in most places, and it seems to have been the custom to depute some individual to blow a horn vigorously in the large streets, to awaken the apprentices and journeymen. The horn was blown at five o'clock in summer and six in winter; again, at eight in the evening, it gave the signal to cease work for the day. Even so late as 1860 one of the Otley mills called its employees to work by means of a horn blown in the streets near the mill.

During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when the power-loom was ousting the hand-loom from the place of supremacy and the factory system was playing havoc with the old domestic organization, the lot of the hand-loom weavers was very hard. Their wages had gone down, unemployment was rife, and their day of grace seemed quite at an end. In these circumstances the hand-loom weavers looked back, with longing eyes, to the time when the factory was as yet unknown, and sighed for the 'good old times' of the domestic system. To them, in their suffering, the eighteenth-century industrial world became idyllic, the very embodiment of perfect happiness and simplicity—Arcadia transplanted. This idea of the beauty and glory of the pre-factory system became generally accepted during last century, and many writers have sketched the domestic organization of industry in most glowing colours. Such an opinion, however, requires to be examined in the cold light of actual facts, so let us for a moment pause, and consider what were the chief points of advantage and disadvantage in the system which we have sketched in these chapters.

The employee was all in favour of the domestic system. He preferred to work in his own house, where there was an air of liberty and freedom from restraint and supervision. He could suit his work to his pleasure, he could enlist in addition the services of his family. William Child, for instance, resided at Wortley, and worked as a journeyman in his own home, where he had two hand-looms and a spinning jenny. Not only did he work, but his wife and six children were also pressed into service. His wife spun the yarn, the younger children wound it on to

bobbins, and the eldest son, a cripple, occasionally did a little weaving on the second loom.¹ These two advantages are emphasized in the Report of the Commissioners on the Hand-Loom Industry in 1839-40. The commission remarked on the tenacity with which hand-loom workers still stuck to their trade, and stated in a very lucid manner the reasons for this forlorn clinging to a decaying industry. These reasons sum up the situation in the eighteenth century so well that they are worthy of citation: (1) Hand-loom work in the weaver's own cottage 'gratifies that innate love of independence which all more or less feel, by leaving the workman entirely master of his own time, and the sole guide of his actions. He can play or idle, as feeling or inclination leads him; rise early or late, apply himself assiduously or carelessly as he pleases, and work up at any time by increased exertion hours previously sacrificed to indulgence or recreation. . . . There is scarcely another condition of any of our working population thus free from external control'. Undoubtedly this independence was a great asset to the workman. He could choose his own hours of labour, go from the loom-shop to his garden, and in harvest time tramp away to the fields and help to gather in the crops. (2) 'It concentrates the family under one roof, gives to each member of it a common interest, and leaves the children under the watchful eye of the parent.'² From many other sources one has this same advantage pointed out; 'large families are no encumbrance; all are set to work', said Arthur Young,³ and Radcliffe remarked that 'even the aged who retained the use of their eyes and limbs were able to earn their bread in some degree'.⁴ Thus, as one journeyman bluntly expressed it in 1806, 'certainly we prefer having work in our homes; . . . We can begin soon or late, we can do as we like in that respect, and those of us who have families have an opportunity in one way or another of training them up in some little thing'.⁵

The third advantage which has been urged in favour of the domestic system is its healthiness, its revelry in fresh air and

¹ *Reports*, 1806, iii. 102 et seq.

² *Hand-loom Commissioners' Report*, 1839, p. 604.

³ A. Young, *Northern Tour*, iii. 250.

⁴ Radcliffe, *Origin of Power-Loom Weaving*, p. 60.

⁵ Evidence of W. Illingworth, 1806 *Reports*, vol. iii.

rural surroundings, which had their effects in producing a high standard of national health, and a general increase in the average length of life. Many instances of longevity are quoted. We hear of fathers 140 years old accompanying sons aged 100¹; of a man in his ninetieth year marrying a wife who is already a century old²; and Defoe declares of the Halifax district, which he knew so well, that 'the people in general live long, they enjoy good health, and under such circumstances, hard labour is attended by good health'.³ But it is dangerous to base generalizations of longevity on these recorded instances. One would require to see the birth certificates of these veterans, and the very fact that their lengthy existence is commented upon by contemporaries shows that they were the exception, rather than a common feature of the world of that day. If, however, one admits that there may have been a longer standard of life and a higher degree of health, one must attribute it to the whole manner of living, and not merely to the fact that industry was carried on in the home rather than in the factory. There was much in the cottage industry which was quite as unhealthy as the conditions in the early factories. The cottage itself violated many laws of hygiene, and was often low, dark, damp, and ill-ventilated. The very presence of manufacturing processes in or near the dwelling and sleeping apartments did not add to the health-giving qualities of the domicile. The use of oil and evil-smelling concoctions in the treatment of the material, the mixing of the dye ingredients, and the boiling of the dye-vat, all must have helped to render the atmosphere of the cottage foul and unpleasant. The use of charcoal stoves and the general conditions of combing stamped at least one process as deadly, whilst the working of all the other branches of manufacture must have been attended by a dirtiness of dwelling and pollution of atmosphere quite equal to that of the later mill-room. The cottage industry, in so far as it was carried on in or adjoining the house, was unhealthy. What really made for health was not that the work was done in the cottage, but that the cottage was in the country. In the free open expanse of countryside, in the possibility of alternating

¹ Defoe, *op. cit.*, iii. 145.

² *Annual Register*, 1762, p. 78.

³ Defoe, iii. 137.

farming and industrial pursuits, in the enjoyment of the simplest of diets, in the lack of great stress and bustle, and the absence of working under high pressure were to be found the forces which helped to counteract the influence of manufacturing conditions within the house, and gave the worker an opportunity of renewing that strength which the circumstances of his occupation tended to sap away.

One last merit has been occasionally attached to the domestic system, especially by disciples of the school of Ruskin and Morris. These men claim that the application of manual skill and labour, such as was to be found in the cottage industry, gave the workman an interest and pride in the work which he was doing. The joy of creation and the gratification of seeing the product of his labour gradually evolving, these were some of the sentiments which are supposed to have chased through the mind of the eighteenth-century weaver. But did the textile worker ever feel these sensations? Was there much joy or pleasure in working from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. at a slow and cumbrous hand-loom, making cheap cloth, every yard of which was like every other yard? Was not this manual labour very monotonous, physically exhausting, and devoid of any variety and pleasurable excitement? Had these men been carving gargoyles or statues of saints for cathedrals, there might have been the joy of craftsmanship and creative art in their work. But between the production of artistic masterpieces, either in stone or metal-work, and the manufacture of yard after yard of cheap kerseys there is a great gulf fixed, and William Child, the weaver at Wortley, found his work just as monotonous as does his modern counterpart, except, of course, when he left his loom and went away round the villages, persuading men to think as he thought and join the union of which he was a shining light. The Industrial Revolution has been accused of having destroyed man's joy in labour, and of depriving him of that pleasure which he is supposed to have experienced from working in his own home, at something which was entirely the work of his own hands.¹ But the Industrial Revolution never destroyed any such joy and pleasure in the textile industry, simply because they never existed. The trivial round and common task of the eighteenth-

¹ This phrase is taken from Cole, *The World of Labour* (1913), p. 10.

century worker was drab and monotonous, and he would be intensely amused if he could realize the glamour which has been cast to-day over his dreary toil.

Such were the advantages from the workman's point of view, and many masters were quite willing to let the work be done in the men's homes rather than in their own shops. The weavers were paid at the same piece rate whether they were home workers or not, but masters felt that, human nature being what it was, it might be desirable to have one's employees under direct supervision. Thus in 1806 Mr. Walker, of Wortley, explained that he had his men working together as much as possible, 'for the purpose to have [the work] near at hand, and to have it under our inspection every day, that we may see it spun to a proper length'; and he declared that cloth was generally 'more perfectly wrought and with less imperfections at home than abroad'.¹ In similar vein Mr. Atkinson, of Huddersfield, stated that he gathered his workpeople together 'principally to prevent embezzlement; but if we meet with men we can depend on for honesty, we prefer having [the cloths] wove at their own houses'.² This feeling on the part of masters, that it might be preferable to gather one's workpeople together, had gained ground during the eighteenth century. With the expansion of the industry the need for better organization and consolidation became more pressing. The capitalist employer or the merchant was beginning to supervise the work, gauge the market, introduce new methods or new machinery, and supply large orders in a given space of time. But these things were very difficult, if not impossible, under the loose unregulated organization which existed in the domestic system. The liberty of the employee easily became licence; we cannot ignore the persistent accusations of idleness, drunkenness, &c., which are encountered throughout the century, and though they may often be exaggerations they contain a substratum of truthful evidence that the weaver or comber had his seasons of lassitude and low pleasure, in which his own enjoyment caused delay and inconvenience to the master for whom he worked. Supervision of workmanship was impossible, the institution of regular standards of production could not be made, and the absence of the overseeing eye was responsible

¹ *Reports*, 1806, iii. 175 et seq.

² *Ibid.*, iii. 220.

for that burning question of the embezzlement of material which will be dealt with in a later chapter.

The domestic system made it impossible to realize economy of supervision. It was equally impossible to effect any economy of time. In handing about the material from person to person, from place to place, from county to county, days and even weeks were wasted. Thirdly, there was the obvious obstacle to the introduction of new and large machinery into the cottage. The hand-jenny, when it became popular in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, did to some extent oust the spinning-wheel, being of such a size that it could be kept and worked in a room of the ordinary dwelling-house. Later inventions, which involved a larger machine or the use of power, were of no avail in the domestic workshop, and with their improvement and adoption the factory system grew apace. Thus, to sum up, the domestic system was to industry something of what the common field system was to agriculture. It fostered and preserved the small unit; it gave some measure of independence and freedom of action to the worker; it brought with it, as important concomitants, conditions which worked for general physical well-being. But it was wasteful and uneconomical; it was conservative and antiquated; it was inadequate to meet growing demands, and to a great extent incapable of exerting itself to answer any sudden expansion in the market.

Such a system, loaded with difficulties and disadvantages, was sure to be outrun by any new order which could produce greater concentration and more efficient organization. This alternative was already in the field, in the congregation of workpeople under one roof in the eighteenth-century factories. The modern factory system is based on the economy of the accumulation of machinery and the application of power; it embodies the use of capital, the congregation of workpeople, the division of labour, and the exercise of supervision. Each of these factors has great value in itself, but the major part of the economic advantage of the factory springs from the use of machinery capable of performing work quickly, and the use of power which can make the machinery go at a high speed. Until these elements of speed became possible, the factory system did not possess any very great advantage over the cottage industry.

There would be the initial cost of acquiring a sufficiently large building, which would mean a considerable outlay of capital. Then the intending factory owner would have to encounter the objections of his workpeople, who preferred to carry on their occupation under their own roof. Even were such a factory established, its only merit would lie in the possibility of supervising the various processes, and this in itself did not seem to be a sufficient justification for any great expenditure in bringing the manufacture under factory conditions. Hence the factory remained a rarity until the end of the eighteenth century.

We must, however, note the instances in which certain elements of factory organization were being applied prior to the Industrial Revolution. The big clothiers around Leeds, with their dozen looms gathered into one room, had realized the advantage of employing men who worked together under personal supervision, and their loom-shops might be regarded as miniature factories, although the only power which was applied came from the hand or foot of the worker. Similarly there was the assembling of workpeople in the clothing farms west of Halifax, such as was described by Defoe: 'We saw the houses full of lusty fellows, some at the dye-vat, some at the loom, others dressing the cloth, the women and children carding or spinning, all employed, from the youngest to the oldest.'¹ These instances belong to what one might call the first phase in the development of the factory. The same machinery was used as in the cottages, the same power applied; the only respect in which they can be regarded as factories lies in the assembling of workers, the division of labour, the slight accumulation of capital, and the exercise of supervision.

The adoption of water-power for working machinery brought the factory to its second stage. The use of the water-wheel for grinding logwood or corn and for working fulling stocks was common in preceding centuries. During the early part of the eighteenth century the possibilities of water-power were much more clearly realized, and quite large establishments were erected to utilize the latent force of the northern streams. The Derby silk mill, erected in 1719,² was amongst the first great factories in the modern sense of the word. Its machinery

¹ Defoe, *op. cit.*, iii. 137.

² Bray's *Town* (1783), p. 108.

was driven by a wonderful maze of gearings, in which, according to a contemporary writer, 26,586 wheels and 97,746 movements were all fed by one huge water-wheel.¹ The mill employed 200 hands, and turned out enormous quantities of silk yearly. This mill had its imitators, and there was a similar establishment at Sheffield, employing 152 hands, with its mechanism driven by a great water-wheel. Thoresby notices a mill in Leeds 'wherein, by the ingenious contrivance of Mr. John Atkinson, of Beeston, one water-wheel carries both the rape mill, a mill for grinding logwood, also a fulling stock . . . and a twisting mill with eighty bobbings'.² Similarly, a certain Mr. Joseph Stell converted a fulling mill at Keighley into a silk mill driven by water-power, where he wove tapes, ribbons, &c., until he came to an untimely end for counterfeiting coins, when his work perished with him.³

Charity, whether private or public, did something to establish instances of congregated industry and of the use of power and new machinery. Eleanor Scudamore died in 1698, and left £50 to be spent, at the discretion of the mayor and vicar of Leeds, for the use of the poor. They thereupon decided to employ the legacy in buying wool, tools, and implements for the manufacture of woollen cloth.⁴ In the Leeds 'Workhouse', set up by Alderman Sykes in 1629, the poor children were 'taught to mix woolls and perform other parts of that manufacture',⁵ and in Thoresby's time 'many poor girls and boys [were] taught to scribble, a new invention whereby different colours in the dyed wool are delicately mixed'.⁶ In the similar institution at Beverley the poor were employed in work to which they were accustomed, spinning, knitting, &c.⁷ Celia Fiennes⁸ found at Malton (about 1696) 'an establishment by mine lord Ewer's coheiress', who used the rooms of outbuildings and the gatehouse of an old mansion 'for weaving and linnen cloth, haveing sett up a manufactory for linnen which does employ many people'. Sixty years later Sir George Strickland made his

¹ Young, *Northern Tour*, i. 134; also Bray, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

² Thoresby, *Ducatus*, p. 79.

³ Keighley Past and Present, p. 107.

⁴ Leeds Gen. Sess., ii. 18, April 19, 1699.

⁵ Dodsley's *Description of Leeds*, 1764.

⁶ Thoresby, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

⁷ MSS. dated 1732, quoted by Poulson, *Beverlac*, p. 796.

⁸ Celia Fiennes, *Through England on a Side-Saddle*, p. 74.

experiments in industrial charity on similar lines. He established a woollen manufactory at Boynton, four miles west of Bridlington, which, says Young, 'deserves the greatest praise. In this country the poor have no other employment than what results from a most imperfect agriculture, consequently three-fourths of the women and children are without employment. It was this induced Sir George to found a building large enough to contain on one side a row of looms of different sorts, and on the other a large space for women and children to spin. The undertaking was once carried so far as to employ 150 hands, but the decay of the woollen exportation reduced them so much that those now employed are, I believe, under a dozen.'¹ The houses of correction in the West Riding were centres of woollen industry, and here the inhabitants were compelled to spend their time, not in picking oakum or breaking stones, but in preparing yarn.² The Wakefield House had 'cards and spinning wheels for the prisoners, for their use and employment', and similar institutions in other parts made like provision.³

But the finest description of a charitable mill comes from the pen of Dyer, who certainly knew Yorkshire very well. In his poem he has been bewailing the effects of thriftlessness and wild intemperance in demoralizing and disorganizing industry. He then expresses his sympathy with the maimed and genuine poor, for whose sustenance he advocates 'houses of labour, seats of kind restraint'. This is followed by an account of what was evidently a highly organized charitable or poor law work-house.

Behold in Calder's Vale . . .

A spacious dome for this fair purpose rise.

By gentle steps

Upraised from room to room we slowly walk,

And view with wonder and with silent joy

The sprightly scene; where many busy hands,

Where spoles, cards, wheels, and looms, with motion quick,

And ever murmuring sound th'unwonted sense

Wrap in surprise. With equal scale

Some deal abroad the well assorted fleece

These card the short, these comb the longer wool.

¹ Young, *op. cit.*, ii. 7.

² Turner, *Wakefield House of Correction*, p. 70.

³ *Leeds Gen. Sess.*, ii. 291 (1705).

The next process, spinning, was performed by means of Paul's machine, which is described as follows :

We next are shown
A circular machine of new design,
In conic shape. It draws and spins a thread
Without the tedious toil of needless hands.
A wheel invisible beneath the floor
To ev'ry member of th' harmonious frame
Gives necessary motion. One, intent,
O'erlooks the work.

We have the dyer making colours ' to tinge the thirsty web ', and the other processes are described in detail. Thus Dyer sketches an establishment which seems to have been well organized and systematized on the lines of the modern factory.¹ From the lines in Dyer's poem we gather that similar ' mansions ' were to be found in many parts of the Riding.

These are all the instances which have been encountered of Yorkshire factories prior to the Industrial Revolution. Probably there were more than one is accustomed to suppose, but even then the sum total is only small. The forces already analysed all combined to retard the growth of factory production, and to favour the survival of the old order. How long then did the cottage industrial system survive? The popular view is that the change was accomplished and that the domestic system had vanished before the end of the first third of the nineteenth century. This is far from being correct, especially with regard to Yorkshire and its textile industry. The migration to the town and the factory was a much slower process than we suppose it to have been, and was not complete at the middle of the century. The cause of this slowness of decay was that the factory system was a long time in gaining an all-round advantage over the older method of production. It required many improvements to make the eighteenth-century inventions really serviceable. The new looms could throw the shuttle from side to side with much greater rapidity than the hand-loom had done. This meant an increased strain upon the yarn which was used in the

¹ Dyer, *The Fleecce*, iii. 571. The adoption of machinery in workhouses seem to have been more general than elsewhere. Espinasse, *Lancashire Workhouses*, p. 313, says that some of Kay's inventions were lost to the world because of the riotous conduct of the operatives, and consigned to the workhouses of Leeds and Bristol.

shuttle, and therefore steps had to be taken for producing a stronger fibre. The worsted yarn fibre was naturally stronger than that of the woollen, and the power-loom therefore made more rapid progress in the worsted industry than in the neighbouring trade. And still the power-loom did not really capture the worsted industry till 1836 to 1845, as the following figures show:

Year.	No. of Worsted Power-looms in West Riding.
1836	2,768
1841	11,438
1843	16,870 ¹
1845	19,121 ²

By 1845 the worsted hand-loom was practically a thing of the past, and the power-loom was now able to weave both plain and fancy goods. Similarly, combing did not really become a machine industry until the 'forties. The necessary machinery required much adaptation and improvement before it could produce finely combed wool. In 1838 the better qualities of wool were combed by hand, and only the coarser grades done by machinery. With the improvements made about 1840 hand-combing quickly vanished.

In the woollen industry, progress was still more slow. Carding, slubbing, and spinning passed into the mills between 1790 and 1825, and at the same time improved machinery was being devised for cloth finishing. But weaving still remained a task for the hand-loom; the difficulty lay in the feebleness of the yarn, which was too weak to allow any great speed in the passage of the shuttle. This difficulty was especially marked where broad cloths were being woven, and when the power-loom was first introduced it went at no greater pace than the hand-loom. Hence the best pieces and the fancy woollen goods were woven much better and equally quickly by the hand-loom, and it required many improvements in both spinning and weaving before the power-loom could replace its predecessor. Thus the new-comer was scarcely known in the woollen industry until about 1832, and made very little progress during the next twenty years.³ In the 'fifties we still find the cottage weaver clinging with marvellous tenacity to the homestead and

¹ *Reports*, 1844, xxviii. 559.

² *Reports*, 1840, xxiii. 527-90

³ *Reports*, 1845, xxv. 477

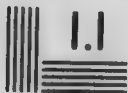


MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2



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hand-loom. Mr. Baines, in 1858, gave an analysis of the employees at Waterloo Mill, Pudsey, in which he showed that there was no weaving whatever on the premises, whilst the cloth was still sold 'in the balk' or unfinished, and then dressed at Leeds.¹

Number of hands engaged on the premises of the mill	136	
" " " " " "	167	{ 120 weavers 7 warpers 40 burlers
i.e. 167 worked in their own homes out of a total of	303	

The factory was still the centre where the wool was carded and spun, or the cloth milled and finished. The women and children worked at the mill, but the male weavers remained in the loom-shop at home. 'Some years ago', declared Baines, 'it was supposed that the great factories, by the power of capital, the power of machinery, and the saving of time, must entirely destroy the old system of domestic and village manufacture. *But they have not materially affected that system.*' Probably, in this utterance, the wish was father to the thought, for the words were spoken just as the twilight was descending on the old panorama. After 1851, and the great display of textile machinery at the exhibition of that year, the hand-loom steadily lost its hold upon the woollen trade. The number of power-looms increased rapidly, the building of mills and the institution of steam plant became general, and weaving, the last of the processes, eventually passed within the mill-gates. Old men tell of the days when the loom stood in the homes of their childhood, and a few survivals are still to be found. In the pattern-rooms of our great mills, in a solitary cottage here and there on the bleak stretches of the Pennines, on the 'Celtic Fringe', and in the corners of our museums the hand-loom and spinning-wheel may still be seen. But they are the rare exceptions, reminders of the once general rule. They have been swept into a back-water, whilst the main stream of industry flows on, bearing on its bosom the big factory and giant aggregation of capital, beside which the cottage workshop and the small industrial world we have been studying appear only as the most tiny of toy boats.

¹ Baines, 1858, in Paper before British Association at Leeds. The lecture is reprinted in *Yorkshire, Past and Present*, vol. ii.

CHAPTER XI

MERCHANTS, MARKETS, AND CLOTH HALLS

THE eighteenth-century towns, especially the smaller ones, functioned chiefly as trading centres. Such towns as Dent, Bedale, Skipton, Cawood, Aberford, and the like spent the greater part of the year in slumber, only awakening for the annual fairs or the more frequent market-days. In purely agricultural districts these periodical gatherings would be small and comparatively unimportant; but in the industrial areas, where men had cloth to sell, and raw materials and provisions to buy, fairs and markets were as important as they were numerous.

So long as the Yorkshire trade in cloth was small, weekly markets for the sale of pieces were also small, and the cloth fairs, held periodically, once, twice, or thrice a year, were the most important centres for commerce in that commodity. In the early seventeenth century there were fifteen places in the Riding with charters for the holding of cloth fairs—Barnsley, Pontefract, Ripon, Lee Fair, and others. Here the cloth-makers brought their pieces on the appointed days, and met the merchants and factors. But with the growth of the industry those places which lay at the heart of the cloth district began to develop important weekly markets. This was the case with Wakefield, for during the middle years of the reign of Charles I that town sought to add to its commercial prestige by instituting a weekly cloth market. To this the inhabitants of the cloth-fair towns objected, and in 1640 the inhabitants of Barnsley and the other places sent a most urgent petition to Parliament, pleading that the weekly cloth market at Wakefield should be stopped, and only the fifteen cloth fairs allowed as in times past.¹ The petitioners failed to obtain redress for their grievances, and the weekly meeting at Wakefield became important, absorbing the

¹ *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, iv. 36. The following description of the town was given in 1628: 'Wakefield now is the greatest markett and principal place & resorte of all sorts of Clothiers, Drapers, and other traffickers for Cloath in all these parts' (*D. S. P., Chas. I.*, xc. 54).

trade from neighbouring fairs and meeting the needs of the local clothiers. One fair which still exists underwent a marked change in consequence of the rise of the Wakefield market. The story is best told in the words of the petition of 1656:

'There is a certaine faire comonly called Lee faire yearly kept at Baghill in ye said Parish [of West Ardsley] uppon two severall daies within less than a month of each, in ye time off Harvests W^{ch} faire formerly stood in Woollen Cloth. But since a Cloth Market hath beene settled in Wakefeild, there hath not for these many yeares beene any Cloth brought to the said faire. Soe that it is now utterly decayed and become a tumultuous meeting off the idle and loose persons of ye Country, where there is much Revelling and Drunkenesse, and hath beene noted these many yeares to be a meetinge where there is usually more or lesse Bloodshed and some lives lost, and also most labourers and seruants hereabouts take occasion thereby to neglect ye Harvest. And as for the comodities brought thither, they are (except some few poore horses) only a few Pedling trifles, off w^{ch} ye Countrey may much Better, and with as much Conveniency, be supplied every market day at Leedes or Wakefeild.'¹

The petition was unsuccessful; Lee Fair was neither suppressed nor revived as a cloth market, and to this day it carries on exchange in 'Pedling trifles' and a few horses of doubtful age and breed.

In a similar manner the Leeds market grew in size and importance, so that it became one of the seven wonders of the north, which every tourist was bound to see. Leeds had grown to be the commercial centre of the woollen area, and as such it drew to itself the produce of a wide and busy field; there were broad cloths and narrow cloths, white cloths and coloured cloths, and its market was therefore 'the life, not merely of the town alone, but of these parts of England'.²

In the seventeenth century the Leeds cloth market was held on the narrow bridge which spanned the Aire at the bottom of Briggate. Here it was open to the inclemencies of the weather, and exposed to the mists and cold damp atmosphere which arose from the river in the early morning. At the same time it was a great obstacle to passers by, and to vehicles coming into Leeds

¹ *D. S. P., Interregnum*, cxxvii. 20. Petition of inhabitants of West Ardsley to J.P.'s of West Riding

² Thoresby, *Ducatus*, p. 17.

from the south on market days. It was therefore removed in June 1684, 'by order of the Mayor and Aldermen from off the bridge to the broad street above, to prevent the inconveniency from the cold air of the water in winter, and the trouble of carts and carriages in summer'.¹ Briggate thus became the cloth market, and here sales took place every Tuesday and Saturday, until the erection of the Cloth Halls moved the centre of gravity elsewhere. Many eighteenth-century writers have described the procedure of this open-air market, but none so well as Defoe, whose account is vivid, and based on an intimate knowledge of the method of exchange: 'The Cloth Market at Leeds', says Defoe, 'is chiefly to be admired as a prodigy of its kind, and perhaps not to be equalled in the world. The market for serges at Exeter is indeed a very wonderful thing, and the money returned very great; but it is there only once a week whereas here it is every Tuesday and Saturday . . . Early in the morning, trestles are placed in two rows in the street, sometimes two rows on a side, across which boards are laid, which make a kind of temporary counter on either side from one end of the street to the other. The clothiers come early in the morning with their cloth, and as few bring more than one piece (the market days being so frequent), they go into the inns and public houses with it and there set it down.'² It requires a lively imagination to picture the clothier setting out with, but often without, a horse, in the very small hours of the morning, and tramping those miles of execrable road to Leeds. The risks of assault on the highway were scarcely less real than the risks of coming to grief in a quagmire, a ditch, or a deep cart-rut. When at last Leeds was reached about five o'clock, the clothier would need something substantial to banish his hunger, and so he made his way to the inns which lined Briggate. Here he ordered a 'Clothier's twopennyworth' or 'Brigg-shot', which consisted of 'a pot of ale, a noggin of pottage, and a trencher of boiled or roast beef for two pence'.³

The stalls which were erected for the accommodation of the

¹ Thoresby, *Diary*, June 14, 1684.

² Defoe, *op. cit.*, iii. 117.

³ Thoresby, *Ducatus*, p. 17, and Defoe, iii. 116. Harley, Earl of Oxford (1725), ventured to suggest that the food was very inferior and declared that 'however trifling the price may appear for so many ingredients, yet so far as I can conjecture it is a very dear bargain' (*Portland MSS.*, vi. 140-1).

cloth were probably the property of the clothiers, or of some Leeds man who allowed the clothiers to use them on payment of a small fee. During the early years of the eighteenth century the innkeepers, who were so generous in providing big meals cheaply, began to attempt to get the stalls into their hands, especially those which stood in front of their own establishments. They then tried to compel clothiers who wished to use them either to patronize their inn profusely, or to pay an excessive fee for stallage. Discontent arose, and eventually the Corporation of Leeds had to take the matter in hand. In 1713 it issued the following declaration, which aimed at checking the efforts of the innkeeper, and also at minimizing the inconveniences which arose from the market taking place at such an early hour:

'Whereas there have beene severall complaints made to this Court of Great disturbances which have happened in the Cloath Market in Leeds Briggate (being a free Markett for all Sellers and Buyers of Cloath Resorting Thither), by [the Innkeepers] Ingrossing a pretended privilege of severall of the fronts and placing their Stooles, Stees and Trussells of wood . . . and obligeing the Clothiers either to spend their Money profusely at the Houses or Inns to which the said pretended privileges belonged or to pay Extravagant rates for lying on their Cloath, as aforesaid. And not only soe, But by the unreasonable time of Setting and Placing the said Stooles, &c., which is frequently begun about 11 or 12 at night to the great disturbance of the Inhabitants lying neare. . . and to the great Hinderance of such who have occasion to pass along that way. For Remedy whereof, from Lady Day to Michaelmas no stall to be set up before 4 in the morning, and from Michaelmas to Lady Day not before 6 in the morning.'

Clothiers were not to set up their stalls before these hours, and no one was to pay any fee for the privilege of holding a stall, since all were to be equally free.¹

At last the counters were erected, and, to continue Defoe's description,

'about six o'clock in summer and seven in winter, the clothiers all being come by that time, the market bell at the old chapel

¹ *Leeds Gen. Sess. Records*, ii. 678. A few days afterwards a number of men were indicted for attempting to hinder the market by claiming privileges for stalls, and by demanding fees.

by the bridge rings, upon which it would surprise a stranger to see in how few minutes, without hurry, noise, or the least disorder, the whole market is filled, and all the boards . . . covered with cloth, as close as the pieces can lie longways, each proprietor standing behind his own piece, who form a mercantile regiment as it were, drawn up in a double line in as great order as military one. As soon as the bell has ceased ringing, the factors and buyers enter the market, and walk up and down between the rows as occasion directs. Some of them have their foreign letters of orders, with patterns sealed on them, in their hands, the colours of which they match by holding them to the cloths they think they agree to. When they have fixed upon their cloth, they lean over to the clothier, and by a whisper in the fewest words imaginable the price is stated. One asks and the other bids; they agree or disagree in a moment. The reason for this prudent silence is owing to the clothiers standing so near to one another, for it is not reasonable that one trader should know another's traffick. If a merchant has bidden a clothier a price, and he will not take it, he may follow him to his house, and tell him that he has considered it, and is willing to let him have it. But they are not to make any new agreement for it, so as to remove the market from the street to the merchant's house. In a little less than an hour all the business is done, in less than half an hour you will perceive the cloth begin to move off, the clothier taking it upon his shoulder to remove it to the merchant's house. About 8.30 o'clock the market bell rings again, upon which the buyers immediately disappear. The cloth is all sold, or if any remains it is generally carried back to the inn. By nine the boards and trestles are removed, and the streets are left at liberty for the market people of other professions, linen drapers, shoemakers, hardwaremen, sellers of good vessels, wicker baskets, etc. . . . Thus you see 10 or 20,000 pounds' worth of cloth, and some times much more, bought and sold in little more than an hour, the laws of the market being the most strictly observed that I ever saw in any market in England.'

When Harley passed through Leeds in 1725 he witnessed a meeting of the cloth market, marked by all the above features. There were about 2,000 persons in the market, 'who might have dealings for £30,000 worth' all concluded in half an hour, and yet all carried on with such hush and silence as if they had all been bred in the school of Pythagoras. This they told us is a very small market, many of the neighbouring traders having been prevented from coming in by the floods and boisterousness

of the weather; at other times they have dealings here in the same space of time and with the same tranquillity for 50 to £60,000. Happy would it be for the family of the Moroses could they procure wives educated under this system.' ¹ Such a market must have been an interesting sight. But the picturesqueness and the sense of quickness and silence did not prevent the market from suffering under many inconveniences. It was still open to the inclemencies of the Yorkshire climate, and also to the annoyance from street traffic. The former might be endured (thanks perhaps to the 'Brigg-shot') so long as there was no rival afield which was providing greater facilities in the way of market conditions. Thus the Briggate market was accepted as a natural institution, and as the only form of market, until the fear of competition brought the Leeds worthies to a realization of its faults. This awakening came at the end of the first decade of the eighteenth century.

The first sign of trouble came from Hightown, a hamlet situated almost in the very centre of the clothing district, about equidistant from Leeds, Huddersfield, Halifax, and Wakefield. Hightown was in especially close proximity to the white cloth area, and would therefore be an admirable site for a white cloth market. Early in 1709 Messrs. Green and Brooke, lords of the manor of Hightown, petitioned Queen Anne for powers to hold such a market every Monday, i. e. the day before the Leeds market. In reply to this request, the sheriff of the county was ordered to hold a court of inquiry, in order to discover whether there was need for such an additional market, and its possible effect on existing markets. After a great amount of evidence had been taken, the special jury which had been appointed to consider the matter decided 'that the erecting a market at High Town for white woollen cloth would be to the damage and prejudice of the sev'all markets of Leeds, Wakefield, Halifax, and Huddersfield'. Undeterred by this adverse decision, Green and Brooke renewed their petition, and evidently made out a strong case in support of their request. This importunity roused Leeds to strenuous opposition. The corporation, along with the leading clothiers and merchants, objected most strongly, declaring that whilst 'a competent number of

¹ Tour of Harley, Earl of Oxford, 1725 (*Portland MSS.*, vi. 140-1).

Markets are for the benefit of trade and commerce. So the necessary creation of new markets will divide, weaken, and destroy trade, and render small towns a nuisance to the public, well as to one another'.¹

Hightown was defeated, but Wakefield, the second rival, was more formidable. Wakefield had fought its way to the front, and its cloth market was now firmly established. The opening of the Aire and Calder Navigation had just given Wakefield excellent facilities for communication with other parts, and the town was becoming a most important commercial centre. The cloths made around Wakefield were generally broad white cloths, a type for which Leeds thought that it alone had the market. There had been constant disputes between the two places, chiefly with regard to tolls. The Leeds Corporation had supported its citizens in their refusal to pay toll to Wakefield, and intense commercial jealousy existed between the two market centres.² Leeds therefore was exceedingly annoyed when it learned in 1710 that Wakefield had erected a cloth hall, in which the pieces were to be sold instead of being exposed to the chances of the weather out in the street. This step caused Leeds to bestir itself, for if Wakefield was allowed to excel Leeds in its facilities for exchange, it would soon detach a large number of white-cloth manufacturers who were now coming to Leeds from Batley, Ossett, Dewsbury, and other places in the Calder valley. Leeds must checkmate the action of Wakefield by providing a similar hall, and so on August 14, 1710, Thoresby rode with the Mayor . . . and others to my lord Irwin's at Temple Newsam, about the erection of a hall for white cloths in Kirkgate, to prevent the damage to this town . . . of one lately erected at Wakefield, with design to engross the woollen trade'.³ The excursion was most fruitful, for Irwin gave his enthusiastic support, and provided the site for the hall. Merchants and tradesmen contributed capital to the extent of £1,000, and as a result of these efforts 'a stately hall for white cloths' was erected in Kirkgate, and opened in April 1711.

¹ Petition to Earl of Newcastle. Copy in MSS. of White Cloth Hall. Also *Wiltshire MSS. Hist. MSS. Comm.*, ii. 206.

² See *Leeds Corp. Minutes*, i. 240 and 243. In 1687 the Corporation granted £50 to one man 'for defending the right of the Parish from payment of toll to Hull and Wakefield'.

³ Thoresby's *Diary*, ii. 65-6.

The building was not large; it was arranged round a quadrangular court, and its two storeys were filled with stalls, on which cloths were laid on market days. Here came the clothiers from the white cloth area of the county, and here for one or two hours every Tuesday afternoon the sales took place.¹

But this first White Cloth Hall, glorying in its pillars and arches, and its cupola, pointed and gilded, soon became too small to answer the needs of the growing trade in undyed cloths. By the middle of the century the accommodation was quite inadequate, and in 1755 the second White Cloth Hall was opened. This new erection was situated on a piece of land south of Leeds Bridge, between Hunslet and Meadow Lane.² The building was much larger than its predecessor, and here for nearly twenty years the market found a home. Those years, however, comprised a period of rapid growth, and by the early 'seventies it had become obvious that still larger premises must be found if Leeds was to maintain its control over the trade in white cloths.

In 1774 such a step became more and more imperative because of the threatened rise of a rival, this time at Gomersal. The marketing accommodation at Leeds was inadequate, and many clothiers were doubtless unable to display their wares to advantage. Therefore certain influential gentlemen residing in and around Gomersal determined to take steps for the establishment of a rival hall at Gomersal Hill Top, about seven miles from Leeds. A piece of ground was given, and a considerable sum of money promised to defray the cost of the building. The leading clothiers of that very busy and flourishing area threw themselves with zest into the project, and persuaded or coerced their fellows to sign 'a bond obliging themselves not to expose their cloths in any other place than Gomersal'. All this roused the ire of Leeds; the Cloth Hall trustees saw that the establishment at Gomersal would deprive the old market of much of its trade, whilst the Leeds merchants pictured to themselves the seven miles journey which they would have to make if they wished to draw upon the supplies of the Gomersal district. The trustees therefore attempted to frighten the audacious upstarts;

¹ Thoresby's *Ducatus*, Addenda, p. 248, and *Diary*, April 22, 1711.

² Jackson's *Guide to Leeds* (1889), p. 143. Also 'Notes and Queries', *Leeds Mercury Supplement*, no. 449.

they threatened proceedings at law, and offered assistance, pecuniary and legal, to those who would break the bond which they had signed. These fulminations were discounted by the open support which the Gomersal clothiers received from the local gentry; nothing could be more encouraging than the following letter, published in the newspapers of December 26, 1775:

GENTLEMEN,

We, being fully desirous of promoting the Woollen Trade in the West Riding of Yorkshire, think it expedient to signify to you our entire approbation of your erection of a Hall at Gomersal, in order to establish your market there, and we recommend you to go on and complete your design with all possible expedition, being clearly of opinion that it will be of the greatest advantage to the industrious manufacturer, and also to the white cloth trade in general. Therefore we are determined to give all possible encouragement to so laudable an undertaking.

(Signed) Sir GEORGE ARMITAGE, Sir THOMAS WENTWORTH, R. H. BEAUMONT, E. E. SAVILE, Sir JAMES IBBETSON,¹ and other manufacturing or landed chieftains of the West Riding.¹

Spurred on by such encouragement, the Gomersal clothiers completed their project and established a hall in defiance of the trustees at Leeds. In 1793 the *British Directory* remarks 'at Gomershall the clothiers have erected a large brick building for a Cloth Market, in hopes of bringing the merchants nearer home, and saving expense thereby. It was of course encouraged by the landowners, but it is doubtful whether it will answer.'² As a matter of fact, this hall never did get a firm grip on the trade, especially as improved means of communication made it more easy to use the market at Leeds. But in its inception in 1774 it gave Leeds a real fright, and was partly responsible for the taking of the next great step.

Whilst the trustees of the White Cloth Hall had been hurling their threats at Gomersal, the merchants of Leeds had turned their attention to more practical and satisfactory methods of

¹ *Leeds Mercury*, December 26, 1775.

² *Brit. Dir.*, iii. 325.

circumventing the new possible rival. This they did by providing the necessary improved accommodation at Leeds, and the erection of the third White Cloth Hall was almost entirely due to the initiative and energy of the merchants. This was only natural, for the new building must be of considerable size, and its cost would therefore be great. The merchants would benefit as much as the clothiers by such a provision, and the wealthy wholesale traders of Leeds were far more capable of raising £4,000 than were the manufacturers of the district. Hence the impetus and the necessary money came from the Dennisons, Bischoffs, Fountains, Wormalds, Smithsons, and other important Leeds merchant families.¹

At a meeting of merchants held on September 10, 1774, it was resolved 'That a Subscription be forthwith opened for Erecting a Hall in Leeds, for the better accommodation of the White Clothiers', and ten days later a similar meeting of merchants elicited promises to the extent of nearly £850. The trustees of the White Cloth Hall were invited to choose a committee to confer with a committee of merchants, and in their hands the scheme rapidly developed. An eloquent and persuasive circular, the postscript of which hinted that subscriptions might be of any amount from £10 to £50, was scattered broadcast to Yorkshire and London merchants, landowners, and all who were in the least interested in the welfare of Leeds. The response to this invitation was most encouraging, donations ranging from a guinea to £250 came from a great number of merchants, and the Leeds Corporation added £100 to the fund. By November the site had been decided upon. The building was to stand on a piece of land situate in the Calls, and known as the Tenter Ground. Viscount Irwin was the tenant for life of this land, which was held from him by the Committee for Pious Uses, on terms of copyhold, the revenue accruing to the Leeds Grammar

¹ The greater part of the information contained in the subsequent pages has been drawn from the MSS. of the White Cloth Hall Trustees, now in the possession of Mr. H. Greenwood-Teale, Atlas Chambers, Leeds. The writer wishes to acknowledge the courtesy and assistance which he received at the hands of Mr. Greenwood-Teale. The collection of MSS. is quite invaluable, and is a veritable mine of information concerning the textile industry of this period. For a more detailed history of the White Cloth Hall, see an article by the present writer in the Thoresby Soc. publications, *Miscellanea* (1913), vol. xxii, pt. ii.

School. The Committee of Merchants approached the owners of the land and tenements should be transferred for the sum of £100. A private Act had to be obtained before such a transfer could be legally recognized, but Irwin quickly carried this through Parliament, and in March 1775 the plans were decided upon and estimates invited. With such great expedition was the work carried out that the hall was opened on October 17, 1775, thirteen months after the issue of the appeal for subscriptions—an undoubtedly remarkable achievement.

The building, part of which still remains, was much larger than its predecessors. It was rectangular in shape, 99 yards by 70 yards, and was arranged round a quadrangle. The interior was divided into five long streets, each with two rows of stands, and contained in all 1,213 cloth-stands. These stalls could be leased for life by paying 2s. 6d. per annum or a lump sum of £1 10s.; and eventually it became possible to acquire the freehold of a stall by paying the £1 10s. Such stalls were entirely the property of the clothier, who could sell them, let them to other clothiers at a rent, or bequeath them to others at his death. Stall-owners were also liable to an annual levy ranging from 6d. to 1s. 6d. to defray the cost of caretaking, sweeping, cleaning, and repairs. Those who did not choose to purchase or rent a stall could make use of the hall on payment of 3d. for each cloth exposed for sale. With the boom in trade during the next thirty years the value of the stalls increased rapidly, so that stands which were purchased in 1775 for £1 10s. were sold in 1806 for three to eight guineas, the price varying according to the situation in the hall.¹

The establishment of this big market was almost entirely due to the enterprise of the merchants of Leeds. They had subscribed the necessary capital, had carried through the legal proceedings, and now that the hall was erected they called upon their fellows to promise 'not to purchase, by themselves or by their agents, any white cloth or coatings in any other White Cloth Hall now erected, or to be erected within the West Riding, except Huddersfield Market'.

The clothiers had played a comparatively insignificant part

¹ *A Walk through Leeds* (1806), p. 12.

in all these transactions, and the whole Cloth Hall estate had been placed in trust in the hands of Darcy Molyneux, Joseph Fountain, and Robert Green, three of the most prominent merchants concerned in the venture. Now that all the preliminaries had been settled, and the new hall erected, preparations were made for handing over the establishment to the clothiers, to be administered by them henceforth. In 1776, therefore, negotiations took place, and at a joint meeting held on October 21, 1776, the transfer was effected. The terms on which the merchants surrendered their powers and possessions were as follows: (1) That the clothiers should subscribe £1,000, in order to pay off the deficit on the hall. The cost of land, buildings, &c., had exceeded the amount of subscriptions by £1,000, and the clothiers were therefore to saddle themselves with that burden. This they did, and the money was at once forthcoming. (2) That 'all persons who had exercised the business of a broad white clothier, either for his own benefit, or as a servant to others, for the space of five years, should be deemed as duly qualified to purchase Stalls'. This clause seems to have been somewhat vague, and subsequently was understood to imply a five years' apprenticeship, instead of one of seven years.

On these conditions, along with one or two others of minor importance, the deed 'drawn up and settled by two learned Council, learned in the Law', was signed, and the hall passed into the hands of the clothiers, or rather of their representatives, the trustees. Of these there were seventeen, chosen from the white cloth districts, and each representing a certain constituency. The distribution in 1802 was as follows:

Mirfield and Hopton	2	Dewsbury, Soothill, Thorn-	
Hartshead and Clifton-on-		hill, and Ossett	2
Calder	1	Alverthorpe	2
Cleckheaton, Wyke, Huns-		Idle, Bradford, and Bowl-	
worth, and Bierley	1	ing	2
Liversedge	2	Kirkheaton	1
Heckmondwike	1	Batley and Morley	1
Birstall and Gomersal	2		

The trustees were elected for three years. At the end of that period, or whenever a vacancy occurred, a letter was sent to

Some prominent clothier in the particular district, asking him to convene a meeting of 'legal clothiers', in order to nominate and appoint 'a yongue man of the Most Respectability and Hnstrate Character', to serve as trustee for that area. The meeting was held, and the person responsible for the arrangements then notified the trustees of the result in a letter, of which the following is a fair specimen, so far as spelling is concerned:

3 Augst 1814.

'Aat A meten Call at Cleckheaton it was unanmisseley agreed to That Wialam yeates is apounted Trustee for the Districkeet for Cleckton, And so forth for the white Cloth Hall at Leed.'

The trustees met annually, on the first Monday in June, and on other occasions when some special business called for their attention. These annual meetings were often formal, and served only as preludes to, and excuses for, the sumptuous banquets of which we find detailed accounts in the cash books of the trustees. At other times a great amount of business was transacted, especially in the revision of by-laws, levying of dues, or alteration of policy. 'Good order without oppression' was the end the trustees were to keep in view, and under their strict rule the hall prospered during the first forty years of its existence.

Meanwhile, what of the *coloured* cloth market? The bi-weekly meeting in Briggate had been somewhat relieved by the transference of the white cloth trade to the hall, and probably the absence of a rival coloured market had kept the makers of these cloths satisfied with existing arrangements. There does not seem to have been the least provision made for the sale under cover of coloured cloths until the big hall was built in what is now City Square.

In 1755 Leeds obtained an Improvement Act,¹ which gave permission to effect several alterations in the thoroughfares of the borough, and to widen Briggate. This proposed disturbance of the street in which the cloth market was held helped to drive the coloured cloth-makers to the decision to build a hall of their own. They were further induced to take such a step by the increased market fees which were charged in order to defray

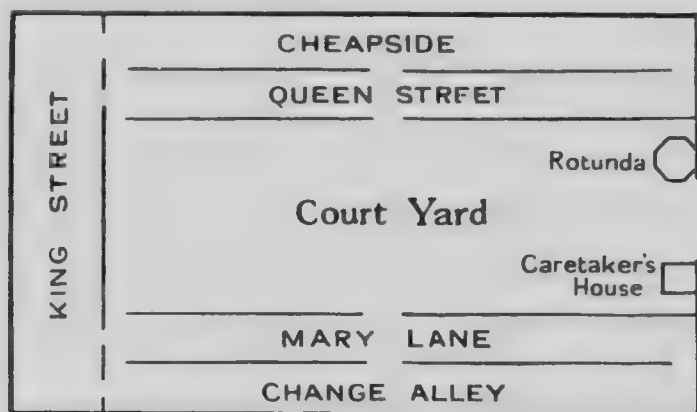
¹ Statute 28 Geo. II, c. 41.

the cost of the street improvements. In 1756, therefore, the coloured cloth community eagerly discussed the situation. Local meetings were held, and general assemblies considered the project.¹ It was unanimously agreed to be desirable 'that a proper piece of ground shall be purchased in Leeds, and a convenient Hall or Building . . . thereon erected . . . for the purpose of lodging and exposing to sale of mixed broad woollen cloth'. A committee of fifteen clothiers was chosen, drawn from the various parts of the mixed cloth area; the rank and file made their contributions, varying from £2 10s. to £7 10s., and paid the money into the hands of this executive, to be by them applied 'in the buying a proper piece of ground in Leeds, and in erecting thereon a Convenient Hall . . . to the Intent that the same shall be forever employed and made use of as a Common Hall for the Purpose of Lodging and Exposing to Sale of Mixt Broad Woollen Cloth, made and sold by the Mixt Broad Woollen Clothiers residing in the West Riding'. Armed with these powers, the trustees looked around for a site, and eventually secured a piece of the 'Park' which is now divided between City Square and the Central Post Office. This land was part of the estate of Richard Wilson, and in selling the site for £420 Wilson made many stipulations. He retained the mineral rights, and demanded that if ever the buildings ceased to be utilized as a market for broad coloured woollen cloths, or were used for any other purpose whatever, both land and buildings should revert to himself or his successors. Wilson also extracted the promise that the buildings should not in any part exceed 24 feet in height, that no windows should be made on the south-eastern side, or stand out from the roof, without his express permission. A cottage might be built for a caretaker, provided that 'the occupier thereof shall be restrained from Keeping a Publick House for selling of ale or any other liquor, and from exercising . . . any Trade or Business on the Premises other than that of a Weaver of Woollen Goods'.² Having promised to abide by all these conditions, and paid their £420, the coloured Cloth Hall

¹ The various deeds of transfer for the Coloured Cloth Hall are in the hands of the Leeds Corporation. The writer's best thanks are due to Sir Robert Fox, Town Clerk, who kindly allowed him to examine the manuscripts.

² Deeds of Sale between Richard Wilson and Coloured Cloth Hall Trustees, May 1757.

trustees received the site for their market, a fine piece of land 120 yards by 66 yards. Contracts were given out to local builders and the work began at once, so that in 1756 the hall was ready for the transaction of business.¹ It was larger than the White Cloth Hall of 1775, and its general arrangement will be seen from the diagram below.²



Each street was lined with stands, and there was accommodation for 1,770 stalls.³ Each stall was 22 inches in width, and was the freehold property of the clothier, whose name was painted on the front. The clothier seems to have received a stall for every £2 10s. which he subscribed, but no one held more than three. Having paid this sum, no other charge was made except an annual 6d. to defray general expenses. Towards the end of the century the trade expanded considerably, and there was a great demand for stalls. Hence those who wished to sell could obtain from £8 to £15 per stall,⁴ and in 1810 a second storey was added to the north wing in order to provide a room for the sale of certain kinds of ladies' dress goods. For permission to make this extension the trustees paid Christopher Wilson the sum of £250, and in return gained power to extend the hall when necessary, to make windows wherever they pleased (even on the south-eastern side), and to permit the sale of silks, cottons,

¹ *Leeds Intelligencer*, April 10, 1757.

² Mayhall, *op. cit.*, i. 139. Also Macpherson, *Annals of Commerce*, iv. p. iv; also all maps of Leeds after 1760.

³ *History of Leeds*, 1797, p. 6.

⁴ *A Walk through Leeds*, 1806, p. 10.

worsted yarn, or any other kind of textile commodities, in addition to the orthodox coloured woollens.¹ By these extensions the number of stalls was increased, and in 1850 there were over 2,500 stands for the sale of cloth. Those men who did not own a stall were allowed to sell their cloth in the hall, paying 6d. for each piece.

Some time after the building of the main block a small octagonal structure was erected on the right-hand side of the gateway. This building, known as the 'Exchange' or 'Rotunda', served as the office and council chamber of the trustees, in whose hands the management of the property lay. There were fifteen trustees, one from each of the fifteen districts into which the coloured cloth area was divided.²

Leeds (3 districts) . . .	3	Dewsbury and Batley . .	1
Rawdon and Horsforth . .	1	Ossett and Horbury . .	1
Idle and Eccleshill . . .	1	Calverley and Farsley . .	1
Armley	1	Morley, Gildersome, and	
Yeadon and Guiseley . .	1	Churwell	1
Holbeck	1	Pudsey and Stanningley .	1
Bramley	1	Hunslet	1

Like their neighbours of the White Cloth Hall, these trustees were appointed every three years, and their powers of jurisdiction were very large. The transfer of stalls from one owner to another had to be registered by them; they were to receive the income of the hall and control expenditure. They had power to draw up by-laws and ordinances, and levy fines on offenders. They watched over the interests of the industry, and were vigilant in enforcing the laws of the realm, whenever necessary. Sitting in the 'Rotunda', they ordered the general affairs of the market, and acted as the fathers of the trade; then at the end of the three years they straightened up their accounts put all into order, and handed over books and property to the newly elected trustees.

The use of both halls was strictly limited to those who had served the 'full period of apprenticeship'.³ At first this implied the seven years' term, but with the breakdown of apprenticeship in the latter part of the century the trustees bowed to the

¹ *Leeds Dir.*, 1817. See also Deeds, July 2, 1700, and August 9, 1810.

² Deeds, January 14, 1757.

³ See all descriptions of Halls, 1797-1809.

force of circumstances, and in January 1797 reduced the seven years to five.¹ This rule was rigorously enforced, and doubtless did much to maintain apprenticeship in the West Riding longer than it would otherwise have survived. The majority of the clothiers accepted the law, but there were many with cloth to sell who had not served the full term of apprenticeship. These men must find another home for their cloths, and thus there existed a market where the 'Irregulars' sold their pieces. At first this market was in Meadow Lane, opposite the White Cloth Hall built in that part in 1755. Here, in the 'Potter's Field', was a big room in which these men deposited their cloths, and here the merchants came as well as to the White and Coloured Halls.² In the early nineties this heretical market was moved to the ground floor of the Music Hall in Albion Street, where the cloths of the unapprenticed found a resting-place until they were sold. This third Cloth Hall caused great annoyance to the trustees of the orthodox markets, and many efforts were made to crush it. It became notorious as the home of the free, and was christened the 'Tom Paine Hall' in honour of that apostle of individual liberty.³ In 1803 the White Hall trustees determined to suppress this disreputable rival by a great stroke of policy. The Tom Paine Hall had been providing two markets per week, namely Tuesday and Saturday, whilst the White Cloth Hall had only a Tuesday market. The Saturday meeting was very popular, and was undoubtedly damaging the supremacy of the White Cloth Hall. In June 1803, therefore, the trustees asked for the opinion of their fellow clothiers as to the 'propriety or impropriety of holding a Saturday market in the aforesaid Cloth Hall', and the decision was in favour of a bi-weekly market. Two years later the trustees agreed 'that the Manufacturers of the White Cloth who are in the habit of Manufacturing White Cloth only and attend the Opposition Market in Albion Street shall be permitted to come into the White Cloth Hall on condition that they be unanimous to come unitedly, and not be instrumental in forming an Opposition or Division at any time'. These two steps had a serious effect on the rival hall, and the suspension of the Apprenticeship Laws about the same time helped to remove the *raison d'être* of the

¹ 1806 Reports, iii. 13.

² Ibid., p. 200.

³ Ibid., pp. 66 and 201

Tom Paine market. In 1809 the number of men selling cloths there was only 260, and with the absolute abolition of the apprenticeship legislation all distinctions passed away, so that in 1817 this opposition cloth market was in the hands of wine and spirit merchants.¹

The procedure of sale in the halls was very similar to that of the open-air market already described. On the mornings of market-days the clothiers brought their pieces to the halls. The horses, on the backs of which many clothiers brought their wares, were not to be left standing about in the Cloth Hall yard. Any horse found in the yard half an hour after the commencement of the market brought upon its master a fine of 1s.; hostlers must come and take all horses away, but boys were forbidden to perform this duty 'as Mischiefs frequently happen from their wantonly galloping the Horses in the street'.² The Mixed Cloth Hall opened first, but the early rising habits cultivated by the street market had been abandoned. The removal of the market indoors meant a postponement of the market hour in order to get adequate natural light. Therefore the opening hours of the Coloured Hall were 8.30 in summer, 9.0 in spring and autumn, and 9.30 in winter. At these hours the bell in the cupola was rung, after which the buyers paced the 'streets' and inspected the cloths laid across the stalls. There was little noisy higgling, for both sides seemed to possess well-defined ideas as to how much they were prepared to give or take. The bargain was struck, and the piece carried off to the merchant's head-quarters. Meanwhile time had been flying, and at the end of an hour the bell rang again to inform the loiterers that they had now only a quarter of an hour's grace. When that quarter had elapsed, the bell rang once more for five minutes, by which time all transactions must have come to an end, or be abandoned. Any merchant or buyer of cloth who was found inside the gates of the hall yard when the bell ceased was fined 5s., with an additional fine of 5s. for every five minutes he still loitered. When the Mixed Cloth Hall had closed, that for white cloths was opened. The laws of sale were almost identical with those of the Coloured Hall, and all transactions must be carried through within an equally short space of time.

¹ *Local Hist.*, 1817, p. 29.

² *Mixed Cloth Hall Orders*, 1797.

Simplicity, dispatch, and absence of noisy bartering, such are the impressions one receives from all contemporary accounts of these markets; but this simplicity was no hindrance to the discharge of great quantities of business. £20,000 to £30,000 worth of cloth changed hands in a busy market-day at the Coloured Hall alone, and during the hey-day of these halls an incredibly large volume of trade was carried on in that hour and twenty minutes.

In all this marketing the trustees kept strict watch over the halls and the stall-holders. In the early years of the trade no white clothier might have the use of more than two stalls, and no man was allowed to expose his wares on the stall of another clothier. Similarly, any person who offered for sale goods made by a clothier not free of the hall met with severe punishment. If a clothier fell into arrears with his yearly rent or his contributions to the upkeep of the hall, his stall was considered forfeit, and put up to auction, many stalls changing hands in this manner. The moral character of stall-holders was also placed under supervision. Any clothier guilty of felony, or convicted under the Worsted Acts, was deprived of the privilege of using the hall; and at a special meeting in 1846 it was resolved that two men, 'having been convicted of Vagrancy under highly flagrant circumstances, leaving no doubt of their dishonest intentions, shall no longer be allowed to frequent this hall or expose any goods for sale therein'.¹

One of the strangest rules of the White Cloth Hall was that which forbade stall-holders to expose any of their wares at any other market in Leeds. This rule referred not only to the Tom Paine Hall, but also to the Coloured Cloth Hall.² Such a stipulation did not impose any very great hardship so long as the clothiers confined their attention to white cloths, but by 1800 many of them were adding another string to their bow by making coloured fabrics as well as whites, and in some cases were deserting the white cloth manufacture entirely. But their trustees forbade them to trade in the Coloured Hall, and so many were in a dilemma. In 1810, therefore, the trustees

¹ All these aspects of regulation are to be found in the Orders issued by the trustees.

² e.g. 1816, clothier fined 5s. 'for exposing his cloth to sale in this and the Mixt Hall at the Same time'.

recognized the changed circumstances by allowing the sale of coloured cloths and fancy goods in a room which had recently been added to the White Cloth Hall, and in 1828 the whole of one of the 'streets' in the building was devoted to the sale of such fabrics. The coloured goods invaded the market, and the White Cloth Hall became eventually a market for mixed cloths rather than whites.

The cloth halls were justly the pride of the city, alike in their size and the extent of their business. Distinguished visitors were taken to witness the working of the markets and observe the processes of sale. When the King of Denmark passed through Leeds in September 1768¹ he was not allowed to depart before he had been taken to see the sights of the Mixed Hall, and certain Austrian Archdukes honoured the halls with their presence in 1815. The buildings were also centres of social and political life before the days when the Town Hall, the Coliseum, and similar places had been erected. On December 4, 1786, Mr. Lunardi made a 'balloon ascent from the area of the White Cloth Hall amidst the plaudits of 30,000 spectators'.² In 1777 a suite of elegant assembly rooms was built over a part of the same hall, and opened on June 9 of that year 'with a minuet by Lady Edlington and Sir George Savile, Bart., when upwards of 220 of the nobility and gentry were present. . . . The appearance of the ladies and gentlemen was more brilliant than was ever remembered'.³ Throughout the nineteenth century the hall yards were the scenes of many diversions provided by enterprising persons for the amusement of the citizens. Balloon ascents and displays of fireworks were very frequent; pig-shows, horticultural exhibitions, circuses, &c., all found a home within the gates of the Cloth Hall yards, and the trustees drew no small revenue from these sources. At the same time these quadrangles formed admirable sites for open-air political demonstrations. The Coloured Cloth Hall yard was generally chosen, because of its spaciousness, and because the steps on the north-eastern side provided a suitable rostrum. Here every question of political moment was advocated to the vast crowds which flocked to listen. Catholic emancipation, the abolition of slavery,

¹ Mayhall, *op. cit.*, under date 1768.

² *Yorkshire Magazine*, 1786, p. 379.

³ See *Leeds Mercury*, that date.

Free Trade, Parliamentary reform, household suffrage, education, &c., all were championed from the steps of the Cloth Hall yard. Here Wilberforce and Brougham delivered weighty utterances, here Cobden denounced the Crimean War,¹ and here at the last great meeting, in 1881, Mr. Gladstone held a gigantic audience spellbound with one of his orations on foreign and colonial policy.²

The Cloth Halls of Leeds were by no means the only ones in Yorkshire, nor were they even the first in the county. Bentley, in 1708, speaks of a 'large and spacious hall', erected by Lord Irwin at Halifax, 'where the weavers and buyers do weekly meet. . . . The sales are so great that the lord's collector often gets as much as thirty to forty shillings at the rate of a penny per piece'.³ These were undyed pieces, which were sold in a building provided by the lord of the manor, who received a toll on each cloth. The hall was opened by the ringing of a bell, and, in order to prevent forestalling, a penalty of 39s. 11d. was levied on any person who even asked the price of a piece of cloth before the bell rang, the fines being distributed amongst the poor of the town in which the offender lived.⁴ As the Halifax industry expanded this hall became too small, and much cloth, especially coloured cloth, had to seek a market in the Butchers' Shambles. At a meeting of manufacturers in April 1774 it was agreed that 'a Hall, erected in some convenient place in the town, . . . would be of great public utility'.⁵ This resolution was speedily acted upon, and a scheme for a big building drawn up. The site was offered as a gift by Mr. Caygill, and, after a long and bitter dispute amongst the manufacturers, finally accepted.⁶ The hall was completed by December 1778, and opened on January 2, 1779, amid great jubilation and a display of fireworks.⁷ The building was erected on the slope of a hill, and therefore contained three storeys in the lower part and two on the higher ground. It was built around a quadrangle, measured 112 yards by 100 yards, and cost nearly £10,000.

¹ *Leeds Mercury Supplement*, May 3, 1879.

Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, iii. 50-61.

² *Halifax and its Gibbet Law placed in a New Light*, by Henry Bentley, p. 9.

³ *Halifax and its Gibbet Law placed in a True Light*, by S. Midgley (1761), pp. 9-10.

⁴ *Leeds Mercury*, April 5, 1774.

⁵ *Yorkshire Couriers*, pp. 207-10.

⁶ *Leeds Mercury*, December 30, 1771. See advertisement 1771 to 1777.

It differed from the Leeds halls in that it did not consist of streets of stalls. Instead of that arrangement, there were 315 closets or apartments. Each of these rooms was quite separate and private. They were taken up by clothiers for about £28 each, and here the pieces of cloth were kept, only to be brought out for the weekly market, which was held from ten to twelve every Saturday morning. Instead of merely owning a stall, the Halifax clothier had a private room, in which his unsold stuffs could be left until next market-day.

During the last twenty years of the century the Halifax Hall prospered greatly. In 1787 only 22 rooms were unoccupied; the remainder were in the hands of men who hailed from Halifax, and also from the wide expanse which lay north and west of the town, Burnley, Bingley, Colne, Haworth, Keighley, Pendle, Skipton, &c., as well as Bradford and other places to the east. From this widely scattered area came woollens and worsteds, and in 1805 cotton goods were admitted. Merchants from Leeds, Hull, and York, and middlemen who bought for foreign patrons came to the Halifax market, and a very large trade was carried on, until the growth of Bradford and the decay of this system of exchange deprived the hall of its trade. It sank from its former usage about the middle of the nineteenth century.

Bradford was comparatively late in obtaining a Piece Hall.¹ This was because the worsted manufacturers were on a more capitalistic basis than their woollen *confrères*; there were fewer of them, their individual stocks were larger, and also, from the beginning, there was a great amount of direct dealing with the merchant or the consumer, and much working to order, without the cloth passing through the open market. Still there did exist a worsted market in Bradford, and as the industry expanded this meeting of merchants and makers became more important. The arrangements for the market were very inconvenient, especially to the merchants. Those worsted makers who lived in Bradford had piece rooms at their own houses, but those who came from the outlying parts had cubicles in a large room at the White Lion Inn, in Kirkgate, where they exposed their

¹ Housman, *Topographical Description of . . . the Western Part of the West Riding* (1800), p. 193, stated that it was reckoned that £50,000 worth of cloths were exposed for sale at one time. The building still stands, and is used by various traders.

goods for sale on market day, and locked up what they did not sell till the following week. Such a system was most unsatisfactory. The market was scattered about in the piece rooms of the clothiers and in the room at the White Lion, and thus there was a great waste of time in passing from one place to another. The growing industry was seriously handicapped by such inadequate market provision. Meetings were held, at which it was decided to erect a hall, and in 1773 the building was opened.¹ The hall was on the same principle as the later Halifax Hall, and contained at first 100 apartments, each with a show board in front of it, on which the cloth was placed during the hours of sale. But this first building soon became too small, and in 1780 an extension was opened, containing accommodation for another 158 holders. The hall was essentially for the sale of worsted, but provision was made by which yarn could be sold at the conclusion of the cloth market. The market commenced at ten o'clock each Thursday morning with the ringing of a bell. Every person who sold goods either before that hour or after 11.30, when the market closed, was fined 5s. Further, if any person was found exposing goods for sale which were not his own property or the property of some fellow occupier, he was severely punished. Any manufacturer behaving himself in a rude or disorderly manner, so as to give public offence, was expelled from the hall and deprived of participation in its privileges. The establishment flourished during the early part of the nineteenth century, but by 1850 trading transactions were generally carried on in other quarters.²

There were other Cloth Halls at Wakefield, Huddersfield, and Colne. Though Colne lay on the Lancashire side of the border, it fed very largely on the industry of the Yorkshire slopes, Craven, and Upper Wharfedale. Eventually its trade was absorbed by Bradford, and the little town lost most of its commercial importance.³ Huddersfield had obtained a charter for a market in 1671, and the cloth was exposed for sale on the

¹ See advertisements, *Leeds Mercury*, 1772-3. Also *Old History of Bradford*, (1776), p. 77. Also *Bradford Antiquary*, i. 135, for article on the Bradford Piece Hall.

² Rules and Orders to be observed by the Merchants, Buyers of Goods, and Occupiers of Stands in the Manufacturers' Hall in Bradford; poster in Bradford Reference Library. ³ James, *op. cit.*, p. 632.

walls of the churchyard. The town made great progress during the eighteenth century, and a hall became necessary. The need was supplied by the chief Huddersfield family, when in 1766 a large circular building was erected at the expense of Sir John Ramsden. It was enlarged in 1780, and about 600 manufacturers brought their cloths here to be sold. The hall was the property of the Ramsden family, who administered the affairs of the market without the assistance or interference of trustees. No stipulations were made as to apprenticeship, and any one might use the hall, provided he paid a certain toll on each cloth.¹ Yorkshiremen from the Pennine valleys sold their wares there, and it was quite a common sight to see clothiers from the neighbouring parts of Cheshire, Derbyshire, and Lancashire offering their goods for sale at the Huddersfield market.²

As for Wakefield, we have already seen the fear caused in the breast of Leeds by the erection of a Cloth Hall at Wakefield in 1710. This hall met the requirements of the local clothiers for half a century, but in 1766 the 'Tammy Hall' was erected for the sale of that type of worsted, and here a considerable trade was carried on every Friday.³

Such was the method of marketing the cloth. From the hand-loom of the scattered cottages came the pieces, rough and unfinished. In the covered market buyer and seller met, and within strictly defined limits of time concluded their bargain. We have observed in some detail the character of the seller. Who was the buyer? It now becomes necessary to analyse more closely the composition of the mass of purchasers which thronged the halls and cloth markets. First, there was the small buyer, the tailor or shopkeeper, who purchased one or two pieces for retailing in his own shop. There was also the pedlar, getting in his small stock of wares, prior to making his regular and extensive itinerary. But these men were in the great minority, and were insignificant when compared with the larger purchasers, who were the most important figures in these market

¹ Sykes, *Huddersfield and its Vicinity*, pp. 216, 246, and 279.

² See Mayhall, *op. cit.*, i. 146. Also Sykes, *op. cit.* Also *Reports*, 1800, iii. 221. Also Allen, *History of the County of York*.

³ Housman, *op. cit.*, p. 183; Allen, v. 460. The Tammy Hall had fallen into disuse by 1830. Mayhall, i. 145. See Leeds newspapers, April 1765; *Leeds Mercury*, December 5, 1775.

transactions. These purchasers fall under two headings, merchants and agents. The merchants might be engaged in either home or foreign trade. There was a large class of home merchants who bought in the Leeds market in order to sell wholesale throughout England. Defoe gives an admirable description of this body of men. After pointing out that the Leeds goods 'are everywhere utilized' for clothing the ordinary people who cannot go to the price of the fine cloths made in the West of England', he states 'there are for this purpose a set of travelling merchants in Leeds who go all over England with droves of pack-horses to all the fairs and market towns over the whole land, I think I may say none excepted. Here they supply not the common people by retail, which would denominate them peddlars indeed, but they supply the shops by wholesale and whole pieces, and not only so, but give large credit, to show that they are really travelling merchants, and as such they sell a very large quantity of goods. It is ordinary for one of these men to carry £1,000 value of cloth with him at a time, and having sold it at the fairs or towns where they go, to send their horses back for as much more, and this very often in the summer, for they choose to travel in the summer, and perhaps towards the winter, though as little in winter as they can, because of the badness of the roads'.¹

Next, there came the foreign merchant, who traded with various parts of Europe, the Mediterranean, and North America. The pioneer companies had broken down, and there was now a great measure of freedom for merchants, which enabled many men to enter into foreign trade who might have been excluded under the regulations of the Merchant Adventurers and Eastland Merchants.

Along with the merchant there was the factor or agent, the middleman, a very important figure in the organization of the cloth trade. The factor purchased cloth for merchants whose head-quarters might be in Yorkshire, London, some other part of England, or abroad. In the Yorkshire newspapers of the eighteenth century there are numerous advertisements similar to the following:

(*Leedes Intelligencer*, July 16th, 1782). 'TO MANUFACTURERS AND OTHERS. A person at this Time wants to engage with an

¹ Defoe *op cit* in the

agent, who has a competent Knowledge in the different Articles manufactured at or near Leedes, to purchase goods on the best Terms: whose character must be unexceptionable, as Two or Three Thousand Pounds will be in his Hands for that Purpose. A commission equal to the Attention in this Business will be allowed: any Person capable of executing the above properly addressing a line for X Z, No. 16, Lombard Str., London, (Post Paid), will be duly regarded.'

In like manner, merchants residing in Holland, Hamburg, and other parts of Europe retained the services of factors, through whom they made large purchases in the markets of the West Riding. Concerning factors Defoe remarks that they 'are not only many in number, but some are very considerable in their dealings, and correspond with the farthest provinces in Germany',¹ and he gives an instance of a factor who purchased kerseys in Halifax market to the extent of £60,000 annually, all of which cloths were then dispatched to the middleman's patrons residing in Holland and Hamburg.²

Such a man was Joseph Holroyd, of Soyland.³ He was a factor engaged in purchasing cloths for English and foreign clients. Amongst his customers were a few London merchants, but the greater part of his trade was with Dutchmen, resident in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, e.g. John d'Orville, Livinus de Dorpere, Ludovicus de Wulf, Peter Deynoote, Hermanus Struys, and others. He kept these men well informed as to the state of the market, sending a list of current prices every fortnight or three weeks, and in 1706 he paid a visit to Holland, strengthening his position with old patrons, and seeking new ones. From them he received standing instructions to purchase a certain number of cloths annually, or obtained isolated orders from time to time. He then purchased the necessary pieces from the clothiers of the Halifax area, dispatched them to his masters, and received for his services a commission, generally amounting to 1½ per cent. The financial arrangements were carried on through the medium of bills of exchange, and in the course of a year Holroyd seems to have had a turnover of at least £30,000. Acting as middleman was no easy task, and Holroyd often found himself between two

¹ Defoe, *op. cit.* (1748 edition), iii. 120.

² *Ibid.* (1724 edition), iii. 100.

³ See *Letter Books of Joseph Holroyd and Sam Hill*, edited by the present writer (Halifax, 1914), *passim*.

millstones. On the one hand the patron fixed a maximum price, and ordered the factor to pay no more than say 30s. for a certain kind of kersey. On the other hand the clothiers had their minimum price of say 32s. for the same type of cloth, and firmly refused to pass below that figure. Holroyd therefore frequently found himself in a dilemma, and when he ventured to exceed the maximum allowed by his master he called on his head the most seathing vituperation. Nor was this the only kind of difficulty. Cloths were often delayed by bad weather, which prevented the pieces, hung on the tenters, from drying, and so many cloths were still unready long after the invoice had been dispatched and the ships had sailed. Further, shipping at the beginning of the eighteenth century was still unsafe, unless accompanied by a convoy, and even the presence of protecting vessels did not safeguard the cloth ships from stormy seas in winter. Shipping was therefore still limited; it was no wise to go without a convoy, and it was courting disaster to set sail in winter time. During the winter months the market was asleep, and the factor had to be content with laying in a store of cloths ready for the spring sailings. But in spite of these difficulties the factor was an indispensable part of the commercial machine, and this class of middlemen became both numerous and wealthy during the century.

These were the men who made the swift bargains with the clothiers in the halls. When the purchaser decided to take a cloth, he agreed to a price based on a hasty examination of the quality of the piece and determined by the length and breadth as stated on the leaden seal fixed to the end of the cloth. The clothier then carried his fabric to the merchant's home or warehouse, where it was carefully measured and examined, deductions being made for any deficiency in length or flaw in quality. Then the clothier received the whole or a part of the revised price; if he did not obtain the full amount, he took a bill of credit, but the smaller clothiers preferred the cash payment, as they could not afford to build up a store of credit notes.¹ If the clothier had two pieces for sale, he brought one to the hall, and usually the merchant who purchased this one sent him to fetch the second.

¹ Defoe, *op. cit.*, iii. 119; also *Reports*, 1821, vi. 486.

The cloth hall system of marketing cloth was especially suitable for an industry carried on by a host of small manufacturers. So long as the makers of cloth were many, and their individual output small, it was highly desirable in the interests of clothier and merchant alike that a public market of this type should be organized, so that exchange could take place regularly and frequently, with the maximum of advantage to both sides. Therefore, so long as the small clothier survived, so long did the cloth halls continue to offer him a ground on which to meet the merchant or factor. But during the eighteenth century other methods of exchange were growing up which destroyed the need for a public market, and eventually superseded the cloth halls.

In the first place, there came to be more working to order. A merchant or factor desired a number of cloths of a certain quality and size. He would give his specifications to some clothier, who then set to work to produce the required number of cloths according to the data supplied by the purchaser. Or, on the other hand, the clothier brought one cloth to the market; it attracted the attention of some merchant, who purchased it, and gave an order for more cloths of the same kind. These subsequent pieces never came into the market, and eventually the clothier would be so busily employed in working to order that he had no further need of the cloth market. In the worsted industry an enormous amount of trade was carried on directly and privately between merchants and clothiers. The manufacturer was generally a large producer, and could take up big orders. Thus the London merchants frequently advertised in the Yorkshire papers for worsted manufacturers who were willing and able to supply them direct with regular stocks of worsted goods, or for agents who would get together these supplies for them. Witness the two following advertisements, which are typical descriptions of the arrangements by which the halls were being superseded.

(*Leedes Intelligencer*, Nov. 12, 1782). 'Tammies, Shalloons, and Callimancoes. Wanted a quantity of the above goods to be delivered in London weekly.—Any person capable of supplying the Same, whether as agent or manufacturer, on the most moderate terms should write to J. B., London Bridge Coffee House.'

(Same issue). 'Wanted to settle a Correspondence in the North of England with a person of repute, capable of supplying with a quantity of Shalloons and Tammies and other articles, in the Grease, weekly or monthly, on the most moderate Terms. As the person addressing this wants a considerable quantity of these articles, he wishes that none but responsible characters will apply. [Address London].

'N.B. The Advertiser has no objection to treat with a Person's Agent.'

In these two advertisements we see the nature of the tendency which had become more and more marked during the eighteenth century, namely the desire on the part of the absentee merchants to make sure of a large and steady supply of the kind of goods which they required. If possible, that supply was to be obtained direct from the purchaser, and in the worsted industry the predominance of large manufacturers made this direct connexion between producer and merchant possible. In the woollen industry, with its multitude of small masters, the merchant could not trouble to enter into contracts with a great number of small manufacturers, so he left that work to the factor; the latter, being in the industrial field, could make the necessary agreements, and get together his large supplies for the merchant by giving orders to the small clothiers around him.

That these methods were being practised long before the introduction of the factory system is seen clearly in the letters of Holroyd and Hill. Holroyd, as a factor, was buying many cloths in Halifax market in 1706. But he also secured great quantities of wares which had never been near the Cloth Hall. He used to call on the clothiers in their houses or workshops, and there bought pieces which they had ready, or gave them orders to make a certain number of cloths for him according to some definite specifications, and for some fixed price. From his correspondence we gather the impression that this private buying was more important than his purchasing in the market. Sam Hill was a clothier, actually engaged in the manufacture of kerseys, bays, and shalloons, and working on a fairly large scale. The greater part of his wares were made in accordance with the orders of his patrons, merchants of London and Holland. From these men he received isolated demands, or was commissioned to send a certain number of pieces each month or

each year. In one of his letters he states that most gentlemen he serves have agreed to take a certain quantity each year and fix the months in which they require them, or the number they require each month; in another epistle he says to one of his best foreign customers, 'I shall be very glad [to know] what Kerseys you think you'll want this Year, y^t I may forbear engaging too far, and leave myself able to serve you with what you want'.¹ The price at which the cloths were sold when ready varied according to the prevailing market rate, and so merchants received their goods at market price, without having to go into the market to secure them. Hill had connexions with a great number of merchants, and was so well supplied with orders at the time the letters were written that he had no time to spare to supply new customers, much less place any cloths on the public market. In his experiments in worsted-making he solicited his patrons to take a few of his shalloons and try to dispose of them; but this branch of his work was small compared with the amount of woollen cloths which he made to order.

The clothiers with whom Holroyd dealt were on the whole a sturdy set of fellows, who retained much of their independence in the face of the encroachment of the factor and the system of working to order. In 1706 the public market was still the great centre of exchange, and the producers were largely free from the thralldom of the mercantile class. Thirty years later Hill's strength of character enabled him to stand erect and independent, in spite of the fact that he was the servant of a number of merchants. But in the rise of these new methods of marketing there was a possibility that the merchants would gain control over the manufacturers and the latter become in name and in fact the servants of the wholesale dealers. This possibility became a reality before the end of the century, when many merchants gained absolute control over production by becoming manufacturers themselves. Merchant and maker became united in the same person, the gulf was bridged, and the wholesale seller of cloths began to employ weavers and spinners to manufacture his pieces. This development was probably most marked in the worsted industry, where a man would employ wool-

¹ See *Letter Books of Joseph Holroyd and Sam Hill*, nos. 110 and 113.

ombers, spinners, and weavers, and sell the yarn or the pieces himself. In the woollen industry the absorption was slower, and did not become a predominant feature of industrial organization until after the Industrial Revolution. But in the years from 1790 onwards there were constant complaints from the domestic clothiers that the merchants were becoming manufacturers, and so were ruining the small independent men.¹ In 1794 a Bill was submitted to the House of Commons, to give the Cloth Hall trustees power to make by-laws with a view to preventing this trespass on the part of the merchants. The Bill was dropped,² and the merchants gradually gained a firmer hold on the industry. The large woollen merchant who lived in Yorkshire was by this time a strange mixture. He had looms in his own establishment, and employed other weavers who worked in their own homes; he gave orders to independent clothiers to make cloth for him according to specification; at the same time he visited the cloth halls, and bought in the open market. Thus he drew his pieces from three sources of supply, and whilst he could not yet afford to dispense with the cloth market, he was obtaining an increasing proportion of his wares through private channels.³

The inevitable consequences of these developments were not fully apparent until well into the nineteenth century, though even before 1820 there was a diminution in the number of stand-holders in the cloth halls, and many stalls were vacant. So much was this the case that, when in 1818 the Leeds Corporation sought to acquire the White Cloth Hall to serve as a cattle market, the trustees of that hall gave the suggestion very serious consideration. They were willing to abandon the building, provided the white clothiers could be given accommodation in the Mixed Cloth Hall. The trustees of the latter market were approached, and offered 900 stands, but on such exorbitant terms that the negotiations were abandoned. During the next thirty years the importance of the halls steadily declined. True, clothiers still came there with their wares, but these men were giants compared with the 3,000 men who had found

¹ *Reports*, 1806, iii. 16. ² *House of Commons Journals*, xlix. 275 et seq.

³ See Mr. L. Atkinson, of Huddersfield, merchant (*Reports*, 1806, iii. 2000) for the story of the decline of the Leeds White Cloth Hall. See Thoresby Soc. publications, 1913; article on White Cloth Hall, by present writer.

a market there in the palmy days of the eighteenth century. The Coloured Cloth Hall contained its 2,526 stalls, which were held by only 680 persons, who possessed any number from two up to forty, and were in many cases quite large manufacturers. The White Cloth Hall had changed in character, by reason of the growing practice of making dyed in place of white cloths, and more coloured fabrics were sold there than whites. In 1848 some of its 1,237 stands were unoccupied, and the rest were registered in the names of 456 owners. Of these, 256 no longer frequented the market, and many clothiers owned as many as 20 or 25 stands. A stall could now be purchased for less than 10s., and when any stands were put up for sale by auction, because of the arrears of the owner, they seldom brought in more than 5s. or 6s.

By the middle of the century the growth of warehouses and the other changes in the methods of marketing cloth were cutting the ground from under the feet of the cloth halls. Still the halls survived, and a few merchants and manufacturers were to be found there on market days. The White Cloth Hall, standing in the Cals, presented a barrier to the extension of the North Eastern Railway into the heart of Leeds, and in 1868 the railway company was obliged to build a new hall before it could demolish part of the old establishment. The new building, erected in King Street at a cost of about £20,000, was never fully occupied, and before 1890 the cloth market there had lapsed. The building occupied a valuable site in the business heart of the town, and in 1896 therefore the whole concern was wound up. In that year purchasers were found for the estate, and the trustees received a cheque for £40,000. After providing an annuity for the hall-keeper, the money was shared out to all stall-holders, and worked out at about £30 per stall, a figure eminently satisfactory to those who had purchased the same for a few shillings. The building was demolished shortly afterwards, and a palatial hotel now occupies the site. The old hall of 1775, however, still survives, behind the Corn Exchange—a broken relic, low, squat, and dirty, with the cupola still aloft over what was once the gateway. The railway ploughs through the middle, and the building is divided up into warehouses, in which are kept all manner of commodities—except cloth. Few

people who pass that way are aware that this grimy building was once the scene of great activity and vast exchange, and only by the name of the street do we realize that here was formerly one of the two great valves by which the produce of the West Riding was passed through the arteries of commerce of the world.

The fate of the Coloured Cloth Hall was even more complete, for the whole of the old building was swept away, and no vestige remains. The hall bulged out into what is now City Square, and the meeting of many ways at that point caused chronic congestion of traffic. In the 'eighties many complaints were made concerning the thoroughfare at this point, and the *Yorkshire Post* echoed the opinion of many when, in 1888, it declared that Leeds was 'choked in its very centre by a congestion of unlighty buildings which would not have been tolerated for a year in boroughs of far less pretensions'. The municipal authorities wished to acquire part of the site, in order to effect street improvements, whilst the postal authorities were in search of a piece of land on which they could erect the Central Post Office. From 1870 onwards, therefore, the Corporation made several attempts to purchase the whole Cloth Hall estate. For a time they encountered opposition from those who still used the market, and who thought that the closing of the hall would be 'a taking and destruction of their property, which would be a hurt to trade, and a most unnecessary and unjust interference with their property, rights, and interests'. Gradually the trustees adopted a more conciliatory attitude, and were willing to get rid of an institution which had ceased to have any commercial importance. In 1885 the 'Leeds Coloured Cloth Hall Act' gave the trustees power to sell the site and buildings, and negotiations were opened with the Corporation. These proceedings were impeded by the question of the price to be paid by the borough. Eventually terms were arranged, and on April 1, 1889, the representatives of both parties met, and the necessary documents were signed. For the sum of £66,000 the Corporation received about two acres of land and the whole of the buildings, with absolute power to treat the property as it thought best. After the transaction of this business, and after the Town Clerk had handed over the cheque for £66,000, the

trustees entertained the Corporation to luncheon, at which the chairman of the trustees handed round copies of a black-edged card, inscribed as follows :

IN MEMORIAM.
Mixed Cloth Hall,
Better Known as the
Coloured Cloth Hall, Leeds.
Erected 1758. Fatum exitus 1889.

That was almost the end of the story. The money received was divided between the stall-holders and the reversioners, heirs of Richard Wilson, who had sold the land in 1756. Evidently the reversioners claimed the lion's share of the spoils, for the clothiers received only £4 15s. for each stand they owned, which cannot explain the destination of more than £12,000 out of the £66,000. As to the building, the Corporation began to demolish it at once, in order to make the necessary road improvements; part of the estate was then handed over to the Postmaster-General, and on it the present Central Post Office was erected.¹

We have wandered far away from the eighteenth century and its methods of marketing; but the story of these cloth halls is interesting, and it seemed desirable to devote a few words to the decline of the public markets. We must now get back to our proper period, and pick up the thread where we dropped it, with the cloth delivered by its maker at the house of the merchant or factor.

The piece had now to be finished, and, in the case of white cloths, to be dyed. There had been a great improvement in the art of cloth-finishing since the days of Cockayne's experiment. The sojourn of Englishmen in Holland and the immigration of Dutch workers and merchants to England did something to raise the standard of English dyeing; London and Coventry became noted as dyeing and finishing centres, and 'Coventry true blue' was soon a classic amongst colours. In the north, improvement was equally rapid. In 1678-9 Thoresby went to

¹ For many facts concerning the later history of the Coloured Cloth Hall the writer is indebted to Mr. Milner, solicitor, Albion Street, Leeds, who kindly placed at his disposal a number of documents concerning the winding up of the hall. The various deeds of transfer are in the possession of the Corporation, but there is reason to fear that the minute books, accounts, and all the other valuable papers which must have accumulated in the course of over a century have been destroyed. See also Leeds Newspapers, 1886-90.

Holland to learn the art of fulling, dyeing, and finishing of cloth, as practised there,¹ and this trip was part of the recognized scheme of training. During the eighteenth century, therefore, the finishing of cloths at home was a general feature of the trade, and few pieces went abroad to receive their final treatment. Within Leeds itself, and also scattered up and down the county, establishments were to be found at work, dyeing, preparing dyeing materials, raising the nap on cloth, shearing, dressing, and performing all the processes necessary for the completion of the perfect piece. These finishing mills might be the property of some independent master who was neither clothier nor merchant, and who performed the work for merchants, receiving a fixed rate per piece; but it was now a very common arrangement for merchants to possess their own finishing² establishments, and so free themselves from dependence on another man.

The processes of finishing were primitive and the results far from superfine. Approximation to the required colour in dyeing seems to have been all that could be obtained, and any new tint was discovered rather by accident than as a result of scientific research. The nap was raised by means of teazles, and then the shearing, which was done in order to remove the inequalities of the nap surface, was performed with hand-shears, which were generally large, heavy, and cumbrous. The piece was then again tentered to its final dimensions and left to dry.

A piece of cloth stretched on its tenter frame was a great temptation to those persons whose honesty was not above suspicion, and clothiers and finishers were much disquieted in consequence of the ease with which cloth could be stolen whilst left out in the open. A newspaper letter dated November 28, 1774, complains of 'the frequent and almost daily robberies committed in this parish [Halifax], and that stealing pieces from the tenters is almost daily practised, by which the persons [employed] in that necessary branch of business are greatly distressed. . . . They cannot take off their goods every night without doing them visible damage, and so are forced either to watch them all night in the cold, or run the dreadful hazard of losing in a single hour the profits of the labours of many months'.³

¹ Thoresby's *Diary*, July 4, 1678, and onwards.

² *Reports*, 1806, iii, p. 9.

³ *Leeds Mercury*, November 28, 1774.

The danger was not confined to the bleak uplands around Halifax; witness the following notices from the *Leedes Intelligencer*.

December 31, 1754: 'In the night betwixt the 26th and the 27th, five yards of cloth were cut off the tenters of Mr. John Darnton, dresser to Sir Henry Ibbetson, Bart.'

January 7, 1755: 'Last Saturday night two yards of cloth were cut from the tenters of Robert Wamman, dresser to Mr. Blaydes.'

January 7, 1755: 'In the night of the 1st instant, five yards of colour'd cloth were cut off the tenters of Joseph Tate, dresser to Mr. Bischoff.'

And so throughout the century, especially during winter and times of bad trade, the purloining of cloth went on. The writer of the letter quoted above may have meant that whole pieces were spirited away, but the risk attendant upon such a proceeding would be very great, and in the towns the prowler was evidently content with his four or five yards, which could be easily carried away and hidden. The offence was one of respectable antiquity, and early Halifax offenders received summary treatment. Here the cloth-stealer, along with other kinds of thieves, was a common figure in the sixteenth century, and it was the custom to condemn any one convicted of this offence to be put to death at once by being guillotined. The framework for this instrument of death stood on a large square stone, which was recently unearthed; the axe-head was released by pulling out a wedge or catch, and fell down a groove in a manner so well known to the French at a later day. This custom of beheading thieves had survived in Halifax alone, long after it had fallen into disuse in other parts of the country. Up to the middle of the seventeenth century the Gibbet Law was no mere dead letter, the machine no antique ornament; the names of men and women alike appear in the list of victims, and this practice earned for Halifax a place of honour in the *Beggars' Litany*.

From Hell, Hull, and Halifax,
Good Lord, deliver us!¹

¹ For a discussion of the legal and other aspects of the Halifax Gibbet see the article on that subject by Mr. J. Lister, in Lang Roth, *Yorkshire Coins*. Also any history of Halifax.

This grim method of upholding the eighth commandment was not generally adopted, and was abandoned in Halifax after about 1650, cloth thieves being punished like other culprits by imprisonment or transportation. In 1742 legislation made a special effort to eradicate the evil. In an Act passed in this year it was pointed out that 'clothiers and others concerned in the woollen manufacture are under a necessity of letting their cloth or other woollen goods remain upon the rack or tenters, as also of suffering their wool to lie exposed in the night time, in order the better to dry and prepare the same; whereby their said goods are more frequently liable to be stolen by wicked and evil-designing persons who are encouraged in their wickedness by the difficulty of proving the identity of the goods stolen'.¹ The statute therefore gave clothiers power to enlist the services of the justices of the peace in the search for stolen wares. The magistrates were to grant power to search the premises of any suspected person, and if the search revealed the existence of any fabrics for which the suspect could not give a satisfactory explanation, the culprit was liable to a term of imprisonment for the first two offences, and transportation on the third conviction. Here was another of those many Acts which make little difference to the world they wish to reform. The Act was drawn up, but no machinery was provided to enforce its clauses with any stringency. The whole of Leeds was guarded by ten constables;² there was practically no lighting, and a general deadly stillness brooded over the tenter-close by night. We fail entirely to realize the thick darkness and loneliness of an eighteenth-century town; the marvellous feature is not that any one should have escaped, but that any should be caught. It was such an easy task stealing in those days: such a difficult task trying to prevent it, or detect the thief.

At last the cloth was ready for dispatch. It was handed over to the merchants or factors who were to take it to other parts of England, or was given into the hands of the carriers and shippers, who would convey it to its destination at home or abroad. And so the material takes to the road once more, after the many peregrinations in its progress from raw wool to finished

cloth. In sketching these numerous wanderings we have had no time to stay and consider the nature of the roads or waterways along which the wool and cloth were carried. Let us therefore conclude this chapter with a short survey of the condition of the means of communication in Yorkshire during the eighteenth century. In an economic organization such as we have been studying, it is difficult to over-estimate the importance of the means of communication. On their excellence depends the quick and easy transit of materials, raw or finished, from place to place; by their unkempt condition, every aspect of industry is 'sore let and hindered'. A bad main road or a shallow rapid river may be as effectual a check to the transfer of produce as the strictest legal prohibition, or the most rigorous system of police.

All records¹ contribute to prove that the roads of the north country had, in the early part of the eighteenth century, plumbed the uttermost depths of disrepair. Tudor legislation, with its demand for statute labour on the highways, had been almost ineffective, and such work as was done upon the roads was of a perfunctory character, leaving the last state as bad as the first. Thus, in spite of the constant efforts of the local justices, the roads of England in 1700 were nearly all bad. Thoresby's *Diary* is illuminating on this topic. Now he loses his way between Doncaster and York;² at another time the roads are impassable by reason of the floods, and he is compelled to ride across fields with the water up to his saddle-kirts;³ again he finds the northern roads a frozen quagmire, 'full of snow, and which was worse, on a continuous ice almost, the melted snow being frozen again, that made it dangerous and very troublesome, so that I was more fatigued with this last twenty miles than with all the journey besides.'⁴ Defoe bears out these statements in his remarks on many Yorkshire highways, e.g. 'the roads to Halifax used to be very bad, and except at the west end, almost inaccessible'.⁵

From about 1727 onwards came the turnpike era, and some

¹ The records of the J.P.'s for the West and North Riding are full of orders concerning the repair of roads. For the whole history of roads during modern times see S. and B. Webb, *The Story of the King's Highway* (1913).

² Thoresby, *Diary*, August 3, 1712.

³ *Ibid.*, May 17, 1695.

⁴ *Ibid.*, February 17, 1700.

⁵ Defoe, *op. cit.*, 1762 edition, iii, 111.

the highways were taken in hand by the turnpike trusts. But the general improvement was very slight, even on the main thoroughfares, whilst the parish roads remained in their 'state of nature'.¹ The most entertaining pages of Arthur Young are those in which he hurls his fierce indictments against the northern highways. Perhaps he exaggerated at times, and his attacks on backward rural economy inspired a similar tirade against the roads of these counties. But his general statements are borne out by other writers, and make one wonder how travel of any kind was possible. Young speaks of roads which are 'excecrably bad', 'very stony and full of holes';² the highway through Wakefield was so bad 'that it ought to be indicted', and the main road between Wakefield and Leeds was 'stony and ill-made', in spite of the fact that it was a turnpike. The road to Askrig was 'only fit for a goat to travel', and the way to Darlington was along a track 'sufficient to dislocate one's bones'.³

On the other hand, some roads were just as good. All in the Vale of York and in the East Riding attained the standard of 'excellent', whilst on the estates of the more progressive gentleman-farmers an almost perfect network of roads was to be found. But, on the whole, the verdict was bad. Later writers⁴ support this general contention, and from a survey of the whole evidence we obtain a vivid picture of the chief faults which were to be found on most of the land routes. Firstly, there was a lack of definition about the less frequented roads. Many went over commons or through wooded districts, and there were few hedges or fences to mark out the bounds of the highway. The number of confusing cross-roads was legion, and there was scarcely any provision of finger-posts or mile-stones until about the middle of the eighteenth century. Hence we have Thoresby losing himself in his own county;⁵ we have a road from Pickering to Whitby on which no traveller dared to venture without a guide;⁶ we hear of people lost on the Pennines, not knowing which cart track was His Majesty's

¹ Bigland, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

² Young, *Northern Tour*, i. 132.

³ See Young's section on Roads, in *Northern Tour*, iv. 574-7.

⁴ Other observers who make remarks on the Yorkshire roads are Marshall (1788), Housman (1800), Daves (1805), Cooke (1812), Bigland (1812).

⁵ Thoresby, *Diary*, August 2, 1712.

⁶ Bigland, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

highway ;¹ and it is recorded that he was thought a wise man who could find his way through the Forest of Knaresborough without expert assistance. The road itself was generally narrow. If it ran through wooded regions, hedges or trees hung over both sides, not only shutting out the light but interfering directly with the progress of travellers, especially those on horseback.² The road surface might be either concave or convex, according to the amount and nature of the repairs which it received. In the former case, water stood in pools during the wet seasons, froze in winter, and perpetuated a quagmire during the greater part of the year. When material had been piled on to the middle of the road, all traffic, heavy or light, stuck to this central elevation, making wheel ruts and horse paths, from which no one cared to stray for fear of toppling over into the ditches.³

Much of the inefficiency of the roads was due to the manner in which they were repaired. No one as yet knew the art of road-making, and there was a general ignorance as to the best methods of preparing and maintaining a durable road surface. The use of 'metal' was still unknown, and any material which happened to be at hand was used, regardless of its suitability. Marshall⁴ and Cooke⁵ complain of the practice in vogue in parts of the East Riding of spreading gravel over soft clay soil, which became hard and firm when dry, but in winter sank into the mire, and only accentuated the heaviness of the path. They also remark on the use of earth,⁶ obtained from the ditches ; such a mad practice could have only one result, in adding to the quantity of mud through which the traveller had to wade. In the West Riding freestone⁷ was used, being near at hand and cheap ; but this stone quickly broke up under the pressure of the constant traffic on the arterial roads, and became little better than mud and sand. The roads about Sheffield were re-surfaced by using the cinders and refuse from the forges.⁸

¹ Housman, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-40.

² Marshall, *Rural Economy of Yorkshire*, i. 192.

³ Whitaker, *Loidis and Elmete*, i. 186-7.

⁴ Marshall, *op. cit.*, i. 180-1.

⁵ Cooke, *Topogr. Description of Yorkshire* (1812), p. 89.

⁶ Marshall, *op. cit.*, i. 186.

⁷ Housman, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

⁸ Dayes, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

One redeeming feature was to be found on some roads in the provision of a causeway or flagged footpath down the middle or side of the road. These 'causeys' were used alike by pedestrians and horse traffic, 'a practice only to be excused by the peculiar badness of the main road'.¹ Along them came the string of pack-horses, the merchant on his way from place to place, and the clothier carrying his raw materials or pieces. The paths were often rough and broken.² The heavy use to which they were put rendered them irregular in surface: there were frequent breaks in the causeway, and from the slipperiness of the stones in winter and the irregularity of the surface there was often as much danger to the night traveller as upon the road itself.

Another saving grace enjoyed by Yorkshire was its supply of bridges. Defoe constantly refers to the abundance of large stone bridges at Harewood, Ripon, Doncaster, Sheffield, and elsewhere.³ Between these great erections and the narrow single-arched pack-horse bridges came every variety of provision for crossing the numerous streams. Stone was cheap in the West Riding, and so the supply of bridges was at least equal to that in any other part of the kingdom.

Up to the time of the turnpikes the roads were repaired by statute labour, the inhabitants of each neighbourhood working a certain number of days yearly on the roads under the supervision of the surveyor of the highways. This system, which looked excellent on paper, seems in practice to have been a complete failure. The labour was evaded as much as possible, or done in a most perfunctory manner, leaving the road scarcely any better for the treatment.

With the growth of the turnpike movement there was a gradual though slow improvement in the means of land transit. From about 1740 onwards Turnpike Acts showered on Yorkshire, and by 1760 that network of roads, so well known to motorists and cyclists to-day, had been woven. The early efforts, however, did not remove the grievances of which travellers complained, and supplementary Acts had to confess in their preambles that the turnpikes already established were 'still in a ruinous

¹ Housman, *op. cit.*, p. 14, and Cooke, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

² See *North Riding Sess. Rec.*, vols. vii-ix, *passim*. Also Housman, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

³ Defoe, *op. cit.*, iii. 122, and *passim*. At Ripon there was a bridge with seven arches.

condition, very dangerous to passengers, and in the winter season almost impassable'.¹ Young's wrath was often aroused against the main turnpikes, whilst Bigland and other writers of the early nineteenth century lamented the wretched surface conditions which still existed on most of the popular highways. The reasons are not difficult to find. The turnpikes were in the hands of large bodies of trustees, including lords, gentry, clergy, merchants, &c., men from almost every walk of life. These men were not paid for their services, and could not be expected to give full, serious, or expert attention to the welfare of the road. Their interest was only general, and their attendance at meetings so casual that nine was the quorum usually fixed by the Acts as being necessary for the transaction of business. Such a loose central body was of little value, and much of the real work must have been left to the surveyors and toll-collectors. But these men were often quite ignorant of the best principles of road-making; they had no thorough plan for constructing a good permanent way, and, even if they had, there was no supply of proper material available. The surveyor had no guiding principles to direct him in his work. He had no notion of winding a road up a hill, but confronted the summit, and attempted to go straight over the crest rather than round it.² Further, the lack of suitable material was a great impediment, and the surveyor therefore used such stone as was nearest to hand, regardless of its qualities for road surface purposes. It required a Blind Jack of Knaresborough, a Telford, or a Macadam to reveal the economy of getting good material, even though the expense might seem to transgress the bounds of common sense. Hence it was not until the nineteenth century that the revolution in highway communication became at all complete, and this was just at a time when improvements in the steam engine were making the railway an accomplished fact.

Along roads such as we have seen above, progress was necessarily slow, and means of transit were primitive. Wagons were seldom used in the hilly districts,³ and in the Vale of York

¹ e.g. 24 Geo. II, c. 22, Act for improving Selby to Leeds road

² 'The engineers of those days used a corkscrew oft enough, but they had not learnt a lesson in roadmaking from it' (Sykes, *Huddersfield and its Vicinity*, p. 202).

³ Young, *op. cit.*, ii. 113.

and the agricultural areas haulage was done largely by oxen, which were more sure-footed than horses on the muddy roads and slippery hill-slopes.¹ For heavy and more extended transit, however, the horse was the favourite animal, and it was largely by means of the horse alone that land carriage was effected in the clothing areas, until improvements made possible the use of carts, wagons, coaches, and other wheeled vehicles. The string of pack-horses was to be seen on every road: they were the carriers of raw material, finished goods, food-stuffs, books, letters, and even passengers. The goods were packed up in trumplers or bags, which were slung across the backs of the horses; letters and travellers were handed over into the custody of the carriers, and away went the long procession over the rough road to its many destinations. These beasts of burden did not need a well-paved broad highway; the mere country lane or narrow bridle path sufficed. If there should be a 'causey', the horses stuck tenaciously to it, and many a dogged encounter took place when two such packs met. The horses could cross fords, and make use of the frail pack-horse bridges which would instantly have collapsed under the weight of a cart or wagon. The first horse carried a bell attached to its collar, the tinkling of which was of no small value on dark nights. In every town was the 'Pack Horse Inn', with extensive stables in which the horses were housed when night came down.² All sizes of contingents, from the large pack of thirty or forty horses to the solitary steed of the small manufacturer, were to be seen moving to and from market, laden with produce or with the food for future labour. 'In winter', says Whitaker, 'the distant markets never ceased to be frequented. On horseback, before daybreak and long after nightfall, the hardy sons of trade pursued their object with the spirit and intrepidity of a fox-chase, and the boldest of their country neighbours had no reason to despise their horsemanship or their courage. Sloughs, darkness, and broken causeways certainly presented a field of action no less perilous than hedges and five-barred gates.'³

Nor were the sloughs and broken causeways or the over-

¹ *Ibid.*, i. 163, and Marshall, *op. cit.*, i. 260 et seq.

² One inn at Huddersfield had accommodation for 100 horses (Sykes, p. 14).

³ Whitaker, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

flowing river the only dangers. To the ne'er-do-well, or the man who was 'down on his luck', there was something terribly tempting in the thought of the dark night, the lonely road, and the solitary traveller returning from market with his money in his pocket, or his '£1,000 of cloth' on the backs of his horses. The eighteenth-century newspapers are therefore full of accounts of highway robberies, in which unfortunate clothiers or merchants were compelled to stand and deliver.¹ Woe betide the man who made attempt at resistance; there was short shrift for him, and many entries bear witness to the revolting cruelty with which the sword was used, the pistol fired, and the hapless traveller left a mangled wreck by the wayside. Few men, therefore, set out on a journey unprepared for what the fate of the road and the fortune of night might bring their way.

Whilst land transit was bad up to about 1775 or 1800, internal water communication was little better. In their natural condition, the many rivers which flowed through the clothing area were of little use. The upper waters were generally too shallow or rapid; their banks had not been strengthened, and every severe storm or prolonged rain brought extensive floods, which washed away bridges and spread ruin and disaster over the adjacent lands.² On the lower levels the streams wound along with serpentine grace; the course was shallow, and the water choked with weeds, stones, or overhanging trees, with small waterfalls and weirs occurring in places. Navigation along such streams was impossible except with small craft and for short distances, and any really extensive use of the rivers could only be made by drastic removal of these impediments.

The canal did not appear in Yorkshire until about 1770, but during the reign of William III steps were taken to render the Aire and Calder navigable.³ The improvement of the facilities afforded by these two streams brought about a large increase

¹ e.g. *Leedes Intelligencer*, November 12, 1754: 'On Tuesday last, betwixt the hours of 5 and 6, as one Craven, a cloth maker, who lives at Horbury, was returning from Leedes Market, he was stopped on Rothwell Hague by two men on horseback, one of which brandishing a sword before his face and demanding his money took from him 2 gns. in gold and 2s. 6d. in silver.'

² *North and West Riding Sess. Rec.*, *passim*; England, *op. cit.*, p. 81. Also Mayhall for frequent accounts of floods.

³ Statute 10-11 Will. III, c. 19, granted power to improve navigation of these rivers.

in the amount of river traffic; Wakefield and Leeds benefited greatly, whilst the extension of the Calder navigation to Halifax in 1740,¹ and to Sowerby Bridge in 1758-60, brought that important kersey-making area into water communication with the sea.² All this was a great asset to the textile industry. The cost of carriage was reduced, coal, iron, and building materials were obtained more cheaply and quickly; wool, logwood, and oil were brought up-stream; an easy outlet was afforded by which cloth, &c., could be sent down to Hull, and thence to home and foreign markets. The increased facilities for obtaining food supplies were no less valuable, and this led to the establishment of large depots for food-stuffs, partly at Leeds, but especially at Wakefield, which now became a still more important market for wool, corn, coal, and all the various commodities needed by the Riding.

Next came the canal era. As early as 1764³ plans were being drawn up for a scheme of canals in the county, and John Hustler urged the need for a waterway which would link up the Irish Sea and the Humber mouth. Meetings were held in 1766,⁴ and the scheme gradually matured. By 1770 all preliminaries had been settled, an Act of Parliament obtained,⁵ and the work of excavation begun. Progress was fairly rapid at first, and by 1777 thirty-three miles, from Leeds to beyond Skipton, were open for trade, whilst a similar length had been made on the Lancashire side. But the cost had already exceeded £300,000, whereas the estimated cost of the whole undertaking had been only £260,000. Lack of funds and differences of opinion concerning the route for the remaining fifty miles caused a suspension of operations, but in 1790 work was resumed, and the canal eventually completed in 1816, at a cost of nearly one and a quarter millions.⁶

This waterway was the most important of the northern canals. Bradford was linked up to it by a short canal opened

¹ Defoe (later editions), iii. 122, 140.

² 31 Geo. II, c. 72. Destroyed by floods, but repaired in 1769.

³ The *York Courant* had taken up the idea in 1764. Also pamphlet written by Hustler. See admirable article by Killick, on the 'Early History of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal', in the *Bradford Antiquary*, vol. iii.

⁴ *Leeds Intelligencer*, July 2, 1766.

⁵ 10 Geo. III, c. 114.

⁶ Priestley, *History of Inland Communication* (1831), p. 424.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

in 1774,¹ and three other waterways provided continuous passage between Yorkshire and the counties west of the Pennines.² All these routes helped in the development of commerce in the county, and assisted in the rapid expansion of the industry during the subsequent half century. By 1830 Yorkshire manufacturers and merchants had at their disposal an admirable system of highways and waterways, but the next thirty years were to witness the provision of a network of railways which destroyed much of the commercial importance of road and canal. This wealth of means of transit presents a marked contrast to the position of the clothier and merchant a century previous. There is much to admire in the picture of these eighteenth-century Yorkshiremen, toiling away amid all manner of difficulties, fighting the storms and floundering in the mud. That weekly journey of the clothier to market, or the regular itinerary of the merchant, was no easy task, and these men were ready to endure much and to risk much in the pursuit of their trade.

¹ *Old History of Bradford* (1776), pp. 13-14.

² These routes were (1) canal from Calder and Hebble Navigation over to Rochdale; (2) Trent and Mersey Canal; (3) canal from Calder to Huddersfield, thence over Pennines to Oldham, where a canal had been made to Ashton and Manchester. The Pennine canal was made in 1794.

CHAPTER XII

THE STATE AND INDUSTRIAL MORALITY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

IN chapters iv and vii we have seen the comparative failure of all attempts to regulate effectively the cloth industry. Tudor legislation, which fixed lengths, breadths, and weights, had been of little avail to check frauds and deceits; the ulnager had disappeared in the early part of the eighteenth century; finally, the Stuart corporations had failed entirely to maintain high standards of workmanship, and were either dead or in a state of impotence by the accession of Anne.

These persistent failures did not dissuade the Government from attempting once more to establish efficient machinery of supervision, and the statute book of the eighteenth century is loaded with legislation which aimed at producing a higher moral tone in industrial life. Some of this legislation affected all parts of the country, but the reputation of the Yorkshire industry was as lamentable as its importance was great, and many acts were passed during the first three quarters of the eighteenth century to deal with the West Riding alone.

The Act of 1623 which had been operative throughout the seventeenth century had fixed definite lengths, breadths, and weights for various kinds of cloths. This legislation, reinforced by the ordinances of companies and corporations, had survived to some extent up to the end of the seventeenth century; but by that time it had become potent that the Stuart machinery had broken down, and that new regulations must be made in the light of changed conditions. Excessive tentering and stretching of cloth was still as common as ever, and the old maximum legal sizes had long since been exceeded, so that, as Thoresby¹ pointed out, the Northern Dozens might now be of any length up to 60 yards. Some of this length was fictitious, being due to the extent to which the cloth had been tentered; there was a lead tag on the end of each cloth stating the inflated dimensions

¹ Thoresby, *Diary*, p. 7.

of the piece, but when the merchant bought the cloth and took it to be finished he found that it shrank when immersed in water.

The complaints concerning these cloths grew very loud in 1708, when petitions were sent to the House of Commons, asking for strong statutory interference.¹ A Bill, backed by Thoresby² and many of the leading inhabitants of the Riding was placed before Parliament and rushed through all its stages, becoming law in 1708, as 'an Act for the better ascertaining the lengths and breadths of Woollen Cloths made in the County of York'.³ Briefly, this Act fixed minimum breadths and maximum lengths: broad cloths were to be at least $5\frac{1}{2}$ quarters in breadth, and whole broad cloths not more than 46 yards in length. These measurements were to be the limits of the cloth when it was thoroughly wet and had therefore shrunk to its minimum size. Hence the fuller, when he had the cloth immersed, was to measure the piece, and stamp its dimensions on a seal of lead, which was then riveted to the end of the fabric. He was to charge the clothier a penny for this work and for the seal, and if any fuller neglected to perform his duty he was liable to a fine of 20s. Then, with the real minimum size of the cloth stated on the seal, it would not be wise for the clothier to stretch it unduly, since the merchant would be able to gauge the real value of the cloth from the seal affixed by the fuller. But, lest any one should still blindly persist in stretching more than 4 inches per yard of breadth, or more than 1 yard in 20 yards of length, offenders were declared to be liable to heavy fines, half of which went to the informer and half to the poor of the parish in which the culprit lived. One last clause is of interest. Parliament had realized that it was of little use issuing legislation against clothiers, if that legislation was to be administered by justices of the peace who were themselves clothiers or men actually interested in the trade. Therefore any indictments for the infringement of this Act were to be brought only before justices who were neither merchants nor makers of woollens.

This Act, with its demand that the fuller would stamp the

¹ See Petition from Huddersfield, *House of Commons' Journals*, xvi. 142.

² Thoresby's *Diary*, January 1709.

³ Anne, c. 13. This Act went through its Committee stage in one day without any amendment (Stowe MSS. 748, 1708).

loth, might have been effective had there been any adequate provision to ensure that the fullers were really doing their duty. But this was not the case; the system of searching by officials elected at the Quarter Sessions had fallen into abeyance, and, whilst there was some attempt to enforce legislation in Leeds, the fullers who were dotted up and down the country had little to fear from the vigilance of searchers. Hence the fuller stamped the cloth according to the wishes of the clothier, rather than in accord with its true dimensions when in the water. The old evils therefore continued, and in April 1723 the justices at the Pontefract Quarter Sessions appointed a committee to inquire into the frauds prevalent in the Riding.¹ This committee, which consisted of gentlemen, merchants, and clothiers, found that the laws were defective, and therefore appealed to Parliament for more effective legislation to prevent such misdoings. There was much opposition to such measures, on the ground that all statutes of this type had been futile and useless and that the Government ought not to attempt to interfere further with the trade.² In these inquiries before the justices and before Parliament a quaint story was circulated, apparently for the first time,³ and it so struck the imagination of those who heard it that it passed into the ranks of the local legends, and was reproduced as authentic on many subsequent occasions. The story came from a merchant engaged in the trade with Russia, who had supplied Yorkshire cloths to the Russian army. The rough heavy fabrics in which he dealt were admirably suited to military wear, and many Leeds clothiers and merchants were engaged in supplying the needs of the Russian and other armies. But the cloth was all more or less deceptive, excessively stretched, and certain to shrink on its first encounter with water. It appears that the Russian army had just obtained a new uniform, and the whole of the troops, clad in these new garments made of Yorkshire cloth, turned out one fine day to be reviewed by their sovereign. Just as the regiments were lined up, ready for inspection, the sky became cloudy and a short, sharp shower of rain came down, wetting the new apparel. The effect was

¹ *House of Commons' Journals*, xx. 365.

² *Ibid.*, p. 423; also 246 et seq.

³ Add. MSS. 33,344, i. 19: 'The Case of the Yorkshire Clothiers' (1730?)

about 1760, and, for the real Yorkshire cloth at once shrank very considerably, so that the garments went all awry. The sleeves became too short, and the pockets crept up toward the men's arm-pits. This episode brought so much discredit upon English fabrics that the Russian Government imposed heavy duties on all further importations, and set to work to manufacture its own pieces. The story was evidently raked up again about 1760;¹ it was repeated in 1790, when one finds it recited at great length, and with many embellishments for the benefit of French readers, in the *Moniteur* of July 1790.² It seems to have appeared again in 1816, and is finally told in a volume entitled *Data and Postulates*, published in 1852. Here the narrative is admirably expanded, garnished, decorated with great wealth of detail, and recounted with real literary exuberance.

But to return to the committee of 1723. The objections urged against further legislation were overridden and a comprehensive statute issued in 1725. This Act³ really attempted to establish proper regulations, and also to set up machinery of supervision to ensure that the Act was efficiently administered; but it concerned itself with broad cloths only, and for some years to come narrow cloths were left untouched.

The provisions of this Act were briefly as follows:

1. The clothier was to weave or sew his name and address at the end of all his pieces, under pain of being fined £5.
2. Maximum lengths and minimum breadths were fixed for cloths, and these dimensions were to be complied with by pieces when they had been thoroughly washed, scoured, and fully milled. A fine of 20s. was imposed on every yard by which a cloth exceeded the stipulated length.
3. The fuller was again commandeered to attest the quantity of the cloth. Every fuller was required to take an oath before the justices that he would well and truly measure all cloths before they left his hands, and fix at each end of every piece a seal of lead, on which were stamped his own name and the

¹ *Reports* 1807, iii. 373.

² *Moniteur*, no. 101, Samedi, 10 juillet 1790, v. 77. Despatch 'de Leeds, le sept juin'. For the full story see *Tricks of the Trade*, by the present writer, Thoresby Soc., vol. xxii, pt. iii (1914).

³ Statute 11 Geo. I. c. 24.

size of the piece. He was then to enter in a register full particulars of each broad cloth which he milled, and, finally, he was to charge the clothier 2*d.*, one penny of which went to the Treasurer of the West Riding, the remaining penny being his own recompense for his trouble, as well as a payment for the cloth. If he failed in these duties, or made out the cloth falsely, he was liable to a fine of £5.

4. Thanks to the above provision it was hoped that fraud might vanish at once, and confidence be restored to the buyers of Yorkshire cloths. But in case the merchant, having purchased any piece, felt dubious as to the accuracy of the statements made on the seal, he could, within six days of purchase, have the cloth immersed, in the presence of the clothier; if, after four hours' immersion, the measurements differed from those recorded on the seal, the merchant could demand a reduction of one-sixth of the price of the piece, the clothier being allowed to compensate himself for this loss by claiming the same amount from the fuller.

5. Finally, in the finishing of cloth by the dresser, all parts of the cloth were to be finished and dressed evenly, 'not only at the sides and edges next to the list (as hath of late years been the custom) but also in the middle from end to end'. After which the cloth-dresser was to add a seal containing his name at the end of each piece.

Thus labelled by clothier, fuller, and finisher, it was hoped that the cloth would at last be of good repute. But most of these provisions were similar to those of previous enactments, and so it might be expected that the pious aspirations which brought them into being would have ended in smoke, as in previous attempts. Such, however, was not to be the fate of this Act, for its most important feature was the stress laid upon the provision of machinery to enforce these regulations. Each year the justices of the peace were to choose as many men of good character as they thought necessary, to be searchers for the following year, and were to pay these men a salary not exceeding £15 per annum, this money being taken out of the pennies forwarded by the fullers to the Treasurer of the West Riding. Thus the clothiers, in paying their 2*d.* per cloth, provided 1*d.* towards the salaries of the inspectors who were to make them honest men. These searchers were given full power

to enter any mill where cloth was being full'd, and, if they wished, to measure any cloth found there. Also they might examine the register of cloth kept by the fuller, and had power to bring any offender to justice. Lastly, they might enter any house, shop, outhouse, tenter ground, or warehouse, to search for any cloth which infringed the various clauses of the Act; any person resisting them was fined £10, and any fraud discovered meant a penalty of £5.

This Act, renewed in 1733 and 1741,¹ remained in force until 1764 or 1765. Each April the justices of the peace at Pontefract Quarter Sessions² appointed a number of broad cloth searchers for the following year, and gave to each of these men a special district to supervise. The number appointed was generally between 11 and 15, and each inspector received a salary of £12 to £14. The renewal of the Act in 1741 allowed 3*d.* to be charged on each cloth, 2*d.* of which came to the Treasurer. Hence, with a growing industry, and with more than doubled revenue, the small band of searchers could be made into a legion,³ scattered further afield, and more able to give attention to the outlying mills. For the broad cloth area 25 searchers were appointed, with salaries varying from £5 to £15. Eight searchers, with salaries of £1 to £3, were appointed to supervise those parts of the narrow cloth area where some few broad cloths were milled (i.e. around Halifax), and six men were given the sole duty of inspecting the tenters of the whole district, in order to see that cloth hung out on these frames fulfilled the legal demands. In fact, the total salaries paid amounted to about £360 annually. The men were to examine the pieces and test the accuracy of the seals, they were to see that the fuller kept his register properly, and, by haunting their district as much as possible, were to strive to uphold honesty according to the tenor of the cloth laws.

These Acts were confined to the broad cloth industry only, and therefore applied almost entirely to the area within a radius of 10 miles south and west of Leeds. Meanwhile, the narrow cloths, the kerseys, &c., manufactured around Halifax, Hudders-

¹ Statute 7 Geo. II, c. 25, and 14 Geo. II, c. 35.

² See Quarter Sess. Records, annually, eighteenth century, e.g. 1733, three searchers for Wakefield, two for Dewsbury, six for Leeds, two for Birstal, two for Yeadon, one for Arthington, two for Liversedge and Calder.

³ Quarter Sess. Order Book, U, p. 21.

fold, and the Calder valley generally were escaping scot-free, because the laws concerning them had fallen into abeyance. There was no appointment of narrow cloth searchers at the Quarter Sessions, and the clothiers therefore tentered and stretched their pieces to suit their own pleasure. This must now be stopped, and the statute of 1738 brought the narrow cloth industry under a control similar to that of the broad cloth trade. This Act profited by the failings demonstrated in the administration of the sister Act, and more efficient rules were drawn up than were in force in the broad cloth industry. In the first place, the statute abandoned all attempts to fix standards of length and breadth, and allowed clothiers to make pieces of any dimensions they pleased. This was a great concession, and probably did much to remedy fraudulent work, for if legal standards were demanded any cloth which did not approximate to such dimensions could be made to do so by a little extra tentering. Therefore the relinquishing of fixed measurements removed one of the prime causes of over-stretching. Secondly, the weaver was to set his initials at the head of his pieces, and every piece was to be measured by the fuller and also by the searcher. The fuller put a seal at one end, containing his name and the length and breadth, as measured by him; the searcher put a seal at the other end, stating the dimensions as he found them. Then fuller and searcher entered full particulars of each piece in books which they both kept for that purpose, and only when the piece had been sealed by the searcher could it depart from the mill. This was a great advance on the arrangement for the broad cloth industry, in which the searcher did not seal the pieces, but examined only those which happened to be in the mill when he called. Here in the narrow cloth mills every piece had to be searched by him, and any cloth which left the premises before obtaining his approval brought upon its owner or upon the fuller a fine of £5.

Such onerous duties on the part of the searcher necessitated his being in constant attendance at the mills, and therefore the area allotted to each man was small. In 1738 twenty-two searchers¹ were chosen; some of them had jurisdiction over one

¹ The searchers were men of good character and repute, men who had served an apprenticeship to the trade of making narrow cloths, and were

mill, at a salary of £2, whilst others supervised four mills, a task which involved a considerable amount of walking, and were therefore paid about £14 per annum. With such limited areas, the searchers were ordered to 'attend at the several mills, tenter grounds, and places under their charges twice every day at least, i.e. once in the morning and once in the afternoon'. In this way the fullers of the Holm and Calder rivers and the various becks of the Pennine district were watched. The clothier brought his piece; it was fulled and scoured, measured and sealed by fuller and searcher, and only then could it depart. On taking it away, the clothier had to pay 2d. to the fuller, 14d. of which went to the Treasurer of the West Riding to defray the cost of inspection.

As far as we can gather, these Acts were administered with a large amount of earnestness, and were probably as successful in achieving their aim as any such Acts ever were. The Act of 1725, regulating the broad cloth industry, met with considerable opposition at first. Clothiers refused to pay the fines inflicted upon them, and in many cases the justices of the peace reversed decisions which had been made previously. These difficulties, however, were gradually overcome, and the clauses of the Act more generally obeyed. In 1756 there were 48 broad cloth searchers¹ and 31 for narrow cloths.² But that these men rigorously administered the full and strict letter of the law it is impossible to suppose. They were men who did the work of searching as a by-occupation, and so their duties would be neglected when the pressure of other business was at all great. This was especially the case with the narrow cloth searchers, who were expected to break off their ordinary occupations twice a day, in order to go and examine cloths at the mill or mills under their charge. Fullers therefore often had reason to complain that pieces were delayed in their hands, awaiting the tardy visit of the searchers,³ and in 1743 a surveyor was appointed to travel round the Riding and see that the searchers carried

therefore generally clothiers who took up the searching as an extra means of livelihood (11 Geo. II, c. 28). Alehouse-keepers or those in charge of 'tipping houses' could not become searchers (Quarter Sess. Order Books, Y, p. 61. Also U, pp. 97-9, and *passim*).

¹ Order Books, Y, p. 172.

² Ibid., p. 60.

³ e.g. complaint that searchers are neglecting duty (Order Books, U, p. 235).

out their duties with promptitude.¹ By the sixties the Acts had broken down, especially in this respect, and one witness giving evidence in 1765 declared that 'the searchers very seldom attend at the mill, but leave the muller to stamp [the cloth] himself, because the salaries allowed them are not adequate'.² Thus many cloths were milled without the searcher ever seeing them; the fuller registered only those cloths which the searcher saw, and many were therefore never registered at all. Hence the figures published annually as to the number of cloths milled in the West Riding were probably always too low.

Further, the searchers were often men who had been brought up in the cloth industry, and who knew all its needs and its difficulties. Such men would not be likely to enforce too zealously laws which affected themselves as well as their fellows, and so doubtless there was much harmless collusion between searcher, clothier, and fuller, by which the arm of the law was tacitly evaded.

Lastly, the conditions of the broad cloth Acts almost compelled some faking and excessive tentering of the pieces. The law set up certain standards for these cloths; the broad fabric must not be less than $5\frac{1}{2}$ quarters (i.e. 1 yard $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches) in width. Now when a clothier took a piece to the fuller he did not know exactly how much the cloth was likely to decrease in width when immersed in water. The shrinkage depended upon the nature of the wool, the fineness of the spinning, the quality of the weaving, &c. Hence when the cloth had been watered, it might be of adequate width, or it might be too narrow. In the latter case, there would be a hurried conversation between the clothier and the fuller, and the stamping of a false breadth on the seal; and when the cloth was taken home it would be stretched until it attained the standard width. Thus the establishment of a standard encouraged the excessive tentering of cloths; as one witness declared, 'if there was not any standard, cloth would come into the market better both in breadth and quality, as the cloth would be truly stamped, which would be a means of preventing the clothiers stretching the

¹ *Ibid.*, V, p. 144.

² *House of Commons' Journals*, xxx. 263. Evidence before Select Committee on West Riding Cloth Laws.

cloth as much as they do at present, because when it is under the standard they stretch it in order to avoid the penalties'.¹

A comparison of the two Acts shows that, whilst the narrow cloths were allowed the greater liberty, the provision made for the searching of these cloths was much more thorough than was that for the broads. Hence, whilst the narrow cloth Act remained in force so long as cloths were inspected and sealed, the broad cloth Act had fallen into disuse by the sixties of the eighteenth century. In those parts of the Riding where it had been enforced trade had left the local fulling mills and migrated to more easy-going districts, or fled across the boundaries, taking the pieces to be finished in those counties to which the Act did not extend. Even so early as 1731 the Yorkshire justices asked that the broad cloth Act might be extended to the neighbouring Ridings and counties, so as to equalize competitive conditions,² and in 1765 it was stated that much Yorkshire cloth was taken to be finished in Lancashire, because that county was outside the scope of the searchers' jurisdiction. During 1764-5 many petitions came from the West Riding, asking for a thorough renovation of the broad cloth laws, and for a readjustment to meet the real needs of the situation. A Select Committee of the House of Commons inquired into the matter, and eventually the Act of 1765 was passed, 'for repealing several laws relating to the manufacture of woollen cloth in the County of York, and also so much of several other laws as prescribes particular standards of width and length to such woollen cloths, and for substituting other regulations of the cloth trade within the West Riding . . . for preventing frauds in certifying the contents of the cloth, and for preserving the credit of the said manufacture at foreign markets'.³ An ambitious title for a very full and complicated Act.

This statute was about the last of its kind, and it certainly wound up the series in a blaze of legislative and administrative glory. The Act repealed all its predecessors, which had been 'found by experience not to be effectual for the preventing the frauds, abuses and deceits' practised in the broad cloth industry. This meant the abolition of all legal standards of dimensions,

¹ *House of Commons' Journal*, xxx. 263.

² Quarter Sess. Order Books, S, p. 189.

³ 5 Geo. III, c. 51.

and cloth henceforth might be of any length, breadth, or weight. Further, the justices of the peace, who must not be dealers in cloth or occupiers of fulling-mills, were ordered to choose annually a sufficient number of searchers, men of good character, who followed or had been brought up in the trade. These officials were to be the measurers and sealers of all broad fabrics. Henceforth the fuller did not seal and stamp the cloth; that task was taken out of his hands, and given entirely to the searcher. Every piece had to pass under his inspection, and no cloth could leave the mill until he had stamped upon its seal the correct length and breadth. When the seal had been affixed and the necessary fee paid, the clothier might take away his piece, and, after measuring it to see that the first seal was correct, could tenter it as he pleased. Also the clothier was compelled to weave or sew into one end his name and address in full. This last clause was responsible for a number of amusing cases during the first twelve months that the Act was in operation, for many clothiers innocently and ignorantly used abbreviations, or mis-spelt their names and addresses; some worthy informer, on the alert to earn an informer's share of the fines, dragged these men before the court, where they were convicted 'for false spelling or abbreviating their names and place of abode'. Therefore in the following year an amending Act was passed, one of the clauses of which allowed the clothiers 'to use some common or known usual abbreviation'.

The measuring and sealing of cloths was now placed entirely in the charge of the searchers. This Act was remarkable for the variety of officials which it created. The searchers did the actual sealing at the mill, but in addition there were inspectors, whose duty lay in visiting the workshops, tenters, warehouses, &c., where cloths were tented and dressed, to see that all cloths were sealed and not excessively stretched. Finally there were supervisors, inspectors-in-chief, who went round to both fulling-mills and dressing establishments, to ensure that searchers and inspectors were discharging their duties.

With this threefold provision of officers, with the liberty to make cloths of any dimensions, with the insistence upon each cloth being sealed by the searcher, and with a superior officer to detect any carelessness or sloth on the part of the searchers,

it might be expected that at last the machinery of supervision had reached perfection, and would work harmoniously and efficiently for ever. Each July at the Bradford Quarter Sessions¹ the officers were chosen for the following year, and their salaries fixed. In 1777 there were 46 searchers with salaries up to £24 each, 17 inspectors with stipends up to £25, and 4 supervisors who received up to £80 each. For a time these men did their work with the exemplary thoroughness attributed to new brooms, and a witness in 1806 remarked that 'when the Act was first obtained we saw them [the inspectors] once, twice, or some times three times a day examining our tenters'.² The searchers' work was discharged the most effectively, because it involved the collecting of the fees out of which all the officers were paid. But gradually there came a decline in the vigour with which the Act was administered, and the evidence given in 1806 indicated that the machinery was practically at a standstill by that date. One witness remarked that the stamping was being done in a slipshod manner, and the inspectors very seldom troubled to examine tenters. 'I suppose', he stated, 'they like to do their business with as little trouble as possible, and unless we send for them we never see them. We go on with our own business without the inspector. We think we know how to stretch the cloth better than him. We do not trouble our heads about it, unless sometimes, when we are apprehensive of a dispute between us and the clothiers, and then we send for him.'³ Another Yorkshireman stated 'I have no means of knowing what the searcher does, but if they do their business no better than the inspector and supervisor does, they do it very ill indeed. . . . I think we do not see [the inspectors] twice in a year, unless we send for them.'⁴ The searcher had become equally useless as a check on tentering or as an authority on the length of a piece. His task was now chiefly to collect the fees, and keep the register of the number of cloths; and as a longer cloth meant a larger fee, there would be no very scrupulous measurement of the pieces. Thus the merchants who gave evidence were unanimous in their disregard of the statement of dimensions made on the searcher's seal. 'In no instance do

¹ Quarter Sess. Records, Bradford, July 1777; Order Books, FF, p. 9.

² *Reports*, 1806, iii. 157.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 155-7.

they depend upon the stamper's mark',¹ declared one man, and others pointed out that they never took any notice of the seal, but always had the cloth measured in their own warehouse, before payment was made.² Finally, many merchants agreed that the cloths which they bought unsealed from other counties were often superior in quality to those which were purchased sealed in the West Riding; and the conclusion was that the system should either be abandoned entirely, or enforced strictly, in which latter case it might perhaps be beneficial.³ In 1821 a committee inquired into the working of these cloth laws. It found that they were not in the least fulfilling the purposes for which they were promulgated, and therefore advised the discontinuance of all such provisions.⁴ Parliament acted upon these suggestions, repealed all the acts which had been framed in the previous century, and the whole system of searching at once lapsed.

The disappearance of the searcher marks the end of centuries of attempts to regulate the quality of cloth. From the Assize of Measures (1197), and probably before that time, down to the early part of last century the State had been concerned with cloth, either as a source of revenue, or as an important commodity of commerce, or both. It had struggled to bring cloths to a few standard sizes, so as to simplify the assessment of taxation. It had attempted to fix legal dimensions, to forbid or limit processes and the application of utensils, in its desire to maintain a high quality in English cloths. In these efforts it had been baffled by the growing variety of fabrics, by the fundamental qualities of the materials, by the commercial necessities of cloth-makers and dealers, and by the dispersed nature of the industry. In our own days attempts to regulate the conditions of labour by Factory Acts, Trade Boards, &c., are subject to grave limitations and difficulties in enforcing the law. These difficulties would be infinitely greater if we essayed to regulate, not conditions of labour, but quality of goods. Therefore the task of supervising a scattered industry, working on unscientific lines in days of deficient communications, must have been almost superhuman. The State adopted the best

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

² *Ibid.*, p. 155.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 154, 183, &c.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1821, vi. 437 et seq.

line of attack by placing the administration of the statutes in the hands of local authorities; but this had its many disadvantages, and so all attempts to interfere with the quality of the goods which the clothier offered for sale were entirely abandoned. The policy of *laissez-faire* triumphed, and the sole guide in all future transactions was *caveat emptor*.

The Worsted Committee

One other aspect of industrial regulation remains to be considered, and here we come in contact with an institution established in the eighteenth century, which, after many vicissitudes, still exists in a state of comparative health and vigour. The Worsted Committee was inaugurated in order to safeguard the interests of the worsted master in the domestic system of the eighteenth century; and, though the domestic system has vanished, the officers of that committee still continue the work of preventing frauds and embezzlements on the part of employees.

The domestic system lent itself easily to those practices which arise from lack of supervision. When raw materials were handed out to a workman, and work was done out of sight of the master, it was not difficult for the employee to practise any number of fraudulent tricks on his employer. Embezzlement of material, exchange of poor wool for good, the wetting of wool in order to make it weigh heavier, imperfect or inaccurate spinning, &c., all these things might be practised with a fair chance of success, since the eye of the master or foreman was not ever on the workman. Further, when a master gave out work to be done he often had to wait a long time before he got back the material. The employee worked when he felt disposed, and often neglected work entrusted to him, with the result that the weavers and those dependent upon combers and spinners were often unemployed, by reason of the laziness of those who were preparing the yarn.

These difficulties, though not absent from the woollen industry, were very present to the worsted clothiers of the West Riding. Here there was a stronger capitalistic organization on the one hand, and a keen sense of solidarity of labour on the other. If the master dared to punish an offending workman, either for fraud or neglect, he generally called upon his head the wrath of

the labouring classes in his locality, and might suffer severely for his temerity.

To protect employers, the State had long been attempting to prevent workpeople from making free with their masters' goods. As early as 1610 all spinsters 'embezzling or detaining any wooll' were sentenced either to make full satisfaction, be whipped, or put in the stocks by the constables.¹ Nearly a century later² legislation made another effort, when an Act of 1702 declared that 'frauds are daily committed by persons employed in woollen, linen, cotton, and iron manufactures, by embezzling materials with which they are entrusted', and heavy penalties were laid down for such offences. This Act was occasionally amended,³ and at times actually enforced, as for instance in August 1764, when 'Lydia Longbottom, of Bingley, was publicly whipt thro' the market at Wakefield, for reeling false and short yarn . . . the town bailiff carrying a reel before her'.⁴

But this constant issue of legislation was of little avail, because there was no provision for the actual administration of the law, other than through the ordinary channels of justice. If a constable found an instance of embezzlement or the like, he might take the culprit before the court, or if a master detected one of his employees he might follow the same course. The constable, however, had abundance of other matters which needed his attention, and could give very little time to running down fraudulent workpeople; and the master shrank from putting the law into operation, because he feared the reprisals of his workfolk. Hence, the isolated master was baffled, and the law of no effect. During the seventies the situation became critical. 'Woolcombers embezzled their masters' yarn, spinners reeled false or short yarn, and in case a master tried to put the law into force such a combination existed amongst his workpeople that he could obtain no blacklegs, and his own person and property were endangered.'⁵ Against this organized labour the individual master was powerless. Therefore it needed some similar organization amongst the masters, some fearless, united, and permanent institution, which would boldly search out and

¹ Statute 7 Jas. I. c. 7.

² 13 Geo. II. c. 8; 22 Geo. II. c. 27; 14 Geo. III. c. 44.

³ 13 Geo. II. c. 8; 22 Geo. II. c. 27; 14 Geo. III. c. 44.

⁴ *Leeds Intelligencer*, August 17, 1764.

⁵ James, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-3.

bring to court all cases of fraud, and so ensure that the Acts were more than mere dead letters. This need for an employers' union or association rapidly became more and more apparent and in about 1775 an informal organization was established, which gathered contributions from voluntary subscribers, and used these funds to employ inspectors who were to safeguard the interests of the worsted masters. This initial step was attended with success, and the employers began to seek further powers, and to gain legal sanction for their association. Eloquent petitions informed Parliament of the grievous state of affairs in the West Riding: the worsted clothiers showed that the laws were entirely neglected and overlooked, and that the only remedy lay in establishing a committee of masters and a permanent inspectorate, to see that the statutory provisions were enforced.¹ The representations of the Yorkshiremen were strengthened by similar statements from the masters of Lancashire and Cheshire, counties in which large quantities of raw wool were combed and spun; and thus the North put forward a very strong case. Parliament acceded to the request, and the Worsted Act of 1777 established on a legal basis that organization of masters which still exists as the Worsted Committee of the Counties of York, Lancaster, and Chester.² Once the northern masters had obtained their weapon of defence, those in other parts of the country sought similar protection. In 1784 Suffolk was granted power to establish a committee;³ in the following year the worsted masters of Bedfordshire, Huntingdon, Northampton, Leicestershire, Rutland, Lincolnshire, and the Isle of Ely formed a similar organization,⁴ and in 1790 Norfolk and Norwich set up a Worsted Committee.⁵ Thus the State recognized four bodies similar in many respects to the corporations of the seventeenth century, the aim of which was to promote the welfare of the masters, and to provide special machinery for the administration of a certain type of legislation. When these institutions were erected, three out of the four districts were already losing their textile industries, so that the northern Worsted Committee was really the only one to achieve any importance.

¹ *House of Commons Journals*, xxxvi. 82, et seq.

² 24 Geo. III, c. 3.

⁴ 25 Geo. III, c. 40.

³ 17 Geo. III, c. 11.

⁵ 31 Geo. III, c. 56.

The preamble to the Worsted Act states the reason for the establishment of the committee. It refers to the various laws passed against embezzlement and falsehood in the preparation of yarn, but states that 'the good purpose of the laws has been greatly frustrated, from the manufacturers . . . being unwilling to expose themselves singly to the loss attending the resentment of the spinners and workpeople by prosecuting them for offences against the said Acts; . . . and this important branch of the woollen manufacture will be greatly prejudiced thereby, unless the manufacturers are enabled jointly to carry these laws into effectual execution, which cannot be done without the aid of Parliament'. Therefore it was ordered that a general meeting of the manufacturers of combing wool, worsted yarn, and worsted goods in the counties of York, Lancaster, and Chester should be held immediately at Halifax, due notice having been given in all the local newspapers. At this meeting the committee was to be elected, composed as follows: The Yorkshire manufacturers were to elect 18 representatives, whilst those of Lancashire and Cheshire jointly were to choose 9 persons. These 27 men were to constitute the committee by which the Worsted Acts were to be enforced. They were to meet quarterly, in order to report progress and discuss policy. Above all, they were to watch over the work of the worsted inspectors. These officials, of whom there must be at least two, were to be nominated by the committee, and recommended to the justices of the peace, who at quarter sessions licensed them to act in accordance with the powers granted by the statute. The inspectors were then given definite areas, and each in his respective district was 'to use all due diligence and industry for the convicting and bringing to justice of all offenders'. They were from time to time to inspect the reels of spinners, and whenever they found any breach of law were to lodge information against the offender, and carry on the prosecution of the culprit.

Further, one of the most fruitful centres of fraud would be the home or storehouse of those agents who received the wool, and then gave it out to be spun. These distributors of the raw material might practise many deceits and embezzlements, and it was necessary, therefore, that the inspectors should have power to keep them under supervision. The statute granted

that the inspectors could demand entrance, at all reasonable times, into the dwelling-house, shop, or outhouse of any agent or other person employed to put wool out to be spun, to inspect the yarn in the stock of such agent, and to bring to justice any who offended in such particulars. Any inspector failing in his duty, or guilty of screening an offender, was to be discharged from his office, and placed for a month in the House of Correction. For the guidance of these inspectors, the Act then stated the nature of offences and their consequent penalties. A standard for reeling was fixed and a scale of punishment laid down for false reeling, for embezzling or disposing of materials entrusted to a person to be spun, and for the refusal by agents to allow inspectors to examine their stock. A further Act in the same year¹ revised all the previous statutes concerning misdemeanours, and gave the inspectors further grounds for action. Persons found buying or receiving goods which they knew to be stolen, and persons pawning or selling such materials were to be severely punished. If the inspectors or any one else suspected a person of having in his possession goods which he ought not to have, they were to make complaint to the justices of the peace, who then granted a warrant for the search of the premises of the suspect. The search took place, and if any suspicious goods were found the accused was taken before the justices. If he could not give a satisfactory account as to how he came by the same, he was deemed guilty, and punished, although no evidence had been given to show who was the owner of such materials. The *onus probandi* lay with the defendant. The goods found in his possession spoke against him, and he was a guilty man until he proved himself innocent.

Lastly, this Act gave the master increased power over his workmen, even though the latter did not work under the employer's roof. An Act of 1749 had allowed a man twenty-one days in which to complete and return work entrusted to him.² This period of time had proved unsatisfactory, and was obviously too long. Therefore the Act of 1777 reduced it to eight days, and declared that any workmen who did not return the material, properly worked up, within that time would be liable to the same punishment as for purloining and embezzling. Masters

¹ 17 Geo. III, c. 56.

² 22 Geo. II, c. 27.

were granted power of entrance into the shops and outhouses of any persons employed by them, in order to see that their work was being done properly; and finally, protection was granted to the tools, dye-stuffs, &c., which masters gave out to their employees. Thus the sphere of interference was very large, and the master, or the Worsted Committee inspector as his representative, was given wide powers of supervision in order to enforce the law.

The Worsted Committee, therefore, was to be an organization of masters, protecting materials in the hands of the domestic workers, and the inspectors were to act as an industrial police force, sanctioned by law, and licensed by the justices of the peace. But such a task needed a comparatively large number of inspectors; it needed money. Whence were the funds to be obtained? Before the passing of the Act, the salaries of one or two inspectors had been provided by voluntary subscriptions, but now, with a salaries bill of about £400 per annum, the worsted clothiers could not be expected to contribute so large a sum. There was nothing in the Act to allow the committee to levy contributions, and so the revenue must come from another source. There was at this time a duty on all soap used in England; it amounted to 1½d. per pound on all imported soap, and ½d. per pound on English soap,¹ and had been levied all through the eighteenth century. Such a tax would have been a heavy burden on the textile industry, where large quantities of soap were used in washing, scouring, and cleaning the wool before it was worked up. One pound of soap was required for every ten pounds of wool, and thus the accumulated duty on a year's work would be a considerable sum and a heavy imposition on the industry. A drawback, amounting to one-third the duty, was therefore granted on all soap used for textile purposes;² from time to time the clothier made a statement as to the amount of soap he had utilized in cleaning wool, and then received back one-third of the duty which he had paid on that quantity of soap. All masters who prepared their wool for weaving were affected by this drawback, but at the same time all were to benefit by the activities of the worsted inspectors.

¹ Statutes 10 Anne, c. 10: 12 Anne, stat. ii., c. 9.

² 10 Anne, c. 19, § 29.

Therefore let the cost of the police system be defrayed out of the drawback which the clothiers received. This was the arrangement established by the Worsted Act. When a clothier was receiving his drawback, twopence out of each shilling was deducted from it, and these twopenny levies were forwarded to the Treasurer of the West Riding, who then provided the necessary money for salaries. Thus by an impost on the soap drawback the Worsted Committee was to be financed.

Granted these powers, the worsted masters promptly set to work to erect the machinery for the protection of their interests. The general meeting was held at the Talbot Inn, Halifax, on June 9, 1777, and the 27 members of the committee were chosen, representing the various parts of the three counties. Thus six committeemen were chosen by the Halifax area, four by those attending the Bradford market, two by Leeds, one by Ripon and North Yorkshire, whilst the Lancashire and Cheshire members were distributed in similar manner. The names of these first committeemen are those of famous cloth-making or cloth-selling families—Holden, Currer, Fielden, Garnett, Clapham, &c. Mr. John Hustler, the energetic Bradfordian, who had been largely responsible for the institution of the committee, became the first chairman.¹

The first committee was chosen by a general meeting of all the worsted manufacturers of the three counties. But with that election the share of the ordinary clothier in the management of the committee practically ended. At times the committee would call a general meeting to support or oppose some piece of prospective legislation; the deduction from his drawback reminded the clothier of the existence of the committee, whilst the periodical visits of the inspector and reports of prosecutions kept the activities of the Worsted Committee well in the public eye. But as to the policy or government of the body the rank and file could say nothing; the committee was in practice, if not in theory, a close oligarchy. If it mismanaged affairs and neglected its duty, the general body of clothiers could meet and depose it from office, electing a new committee

¹ The information for this section has been obtained from the Minute Books of the Worsted Committee, in the hands of Messrs. Mumford & Johnson, solicitors, Bradford, to whom the writer wishes to express his gratitude.

in its place. But such things never happened, and the committee remained autocratic and all-powerful. Its first members were elected for life, or for so long as they engaged in industry, and on the retirement or death of a member the committee elected his successor. If a member retired from business or absented himself from the quarterly meetings of the committee for the space of a year, he was deemed to have vacated his position¹ and another person chosen to take his place. The committee met four times a year, three of which assemblies were in Yorkshire, the remaining one in Lancashire or Cheshire. Hence the committee met most frequently at Bradford and Halifax, though Leeds, Luddenden, Hebden Bridge, Wakefield, Keighley, Liverpool, Manchester, Burnley, and Colne were amongst the meeting-places of the quarterly council. Mileage and other expenses were allowed to all who attended the meetings.² Any one guilty of unpunctuality was fined 1s. for each hour he was late, and 2s. 6d. if he failed to put in an appearance;³ in 1782 it was ordered 'that no person, after having his name entered as present, shall absent himself from the business of the Committee for the space of fifteen minutes, betwixt 11 and 2 o'clock, without leave of the Chairman or the Committee first obtained, under the penalty of receiving no money, either for his day's attendance, or for his Expenses'.⁴

The chief task of the committee was the appointment and control of its inspectors. At its first meeting the worsted area was divided into six districts, of which four were in Yorkshire. For each of these an inspector was appointed at a salary of £50, to be paid out of the soap money, whilst the seventh official was appointed to 'make a general inspection and give his Assistance and Information to the other six Inspectors'.⁵ The payment to these men was sufficiently large to provide them with an adequate livelihood, and so they were forbidden to take up any other work. As the initial order declared, 'The Inspectors

¹ September 27, 1779: 'Mr. Richard Brown, one of this Committee having declined being a Manufacturer, and wilfully absented himself from the quarterly meetings of this Committee for the space of one year', his place was therefore filled.

² 10s. 6d. per day and 7s. 6d. for travelling were the grants made to those who attended the meetings. See Minutes, September 23, 1782.

³ Minutes, July 22, 1778.

⁴ September 23, 1782.

⁵ June 23, 1777.

shall devote their whole time in that Employ, and shall not be concerned or employed in any other Business whatsoever, and . . . no part of the Family of such Inspectors shall be employed as putters out of Wool to spin'. These inspectors were not technically appointed by the committee; the committee's business was to find suitable men, and to recommend them to the justices of the peace, who then formally licensed them.¹ This was the result of the curious status of the committee. It was a body established by law, constituted of master manufacturers, and administering laws by the motive of self-interest far more efficiently than they could have been operated through the ordinary channels. Hence that strange alliance between a sectional industrial society and the regular machinery of justice. The inspector, when appointed, became subject to the control of the committee, and held his post so long as he gave satisfaction to his master. Each inspector was placed under the special tutelage of a member of the committee, to whom he had to submit weekly reports, and from whom he obtained orders and supplies of money. If he neglected his duty, this member brought the offence before the whole committee. Some inspectors held their posts for the whole of their lives, as in the case of William Shepherd, who served the committee from 1785 until his death in 1828. Others held office only a very short period, being dismissed quickly for neglect of duty, drunkenness, misbehaviour, screening offenders, mismanaging financial matters, or for 'being incapable of keeping proper accounts' after being repeatedly instructed in the art of book-keeping.²

With such equipment, the Worsted Committee set to work to enforce the laws against fraud, theft, and general industrial immorality amongst the workpeople. The first inspectors were approved at the July Quarter Sessions, 1777, and soon the West Riding began to be inundated with handbills and newspaper announcements. The wicked world was immediately to be cleansed and purged by the committee and its seven stalwart inspectors. Witness the stern fearlessness behind the following

¹ Quarter Sessions Books, FF, p. 6.

² Minutes, June 23, 1783. Also September 24, 1792: 'It appearing to this meeting that Henry Parkinson, an inspector, has Misbehaved in his office, by being negligent, and particularly being in liquor when he attended the justices at Otley', therefore he was discharged.

manifesto, which appeared in the *Leeds Mercury* of August 19, 1777:

'The Committee of manufacturers of combing wool have nominated [seven persons here named] to be inspectors for preventing frauds and abuses committed by persons employed in the manufactures of combing wool, worsted yarn, etc., . . . and do hereby give notice, by virtue of an Act passed last Session, and forewarn all spinners who shall be guilty of reeling false or upon false reel that they will be prosecuted and punished by the said inspectors, as the law directs, without any favour or partiality. They likewise give notice to all agents or persons hired or employed to put out wool to be spun into worsted, that by the said Act such agents are liable to pay a penalty of five shillings for every parcel of yarn made up which is short weight, and which is false or short reeled, unless they produce and do give in evidence what person was the reeler of such yarn, so that he or she may be lawfully convicted; for which purpose it will be expected that the putters-out ticket their yarn.'

The committee set to work in earnest, but its early efforts were not all crowned with success. In the first place, there was trouble with the inspectors, who did not always discharge their duties with the desired efficiency, or prove themselves burning enthusiasts. Of the seven inspectors appointed in 1777, three had been discharged and two had resigned before the summer of 1779, and the committee had much difficulty in securing satisfactory men. The inspectors were paid their wages, but were granted nothing towards their expenses. Hence, when they discovered a culprit, they had to defray their own costs, and reimburse themselves by the share of the fine which came to them as informers. Thus the inspector's task was at times most unenviable, for he had all the expense of bringing an offender to court, and then had to depend on winning his case in order to regain the money outlaid. In such circumstances it was only natural that he should overlook the offences of those who would be unable to pay the fines, and devote his attention to the more wealthy artisans and agents. This miscarriage of justice became notorious in 1784, whereupon the committee declared that the 'inspectors neglect to prosecute embezzlers and buyers of embezzled materials when they think they can receive no advantage, and that they are too eager in prosecuting such persons as they think will pay the pecuniary penalties

inflicted for such offence'.¹ It was therefore ordered that the committee should in future defray the expense of all prosecutions, and that all money received by inspectors in their capacity as informers should be handed over at once to the treasurer of the committee, to be distributed to various charitable organizations. Thus a big incentive to favouritism and partiality was removed, and the committee thereby did much to 'render the Inspectors more respectable and independent prosecutors'.² Gradually satisfactory men were found, the number of discharges became smaller, and the inspectorate reached a state approaching efficiency.

The second obstacle with which the committee had to deal was the ignorance, apathy, or actual hostility of the magistrates. The worsted industry covered a wide area, in much of which agriculture was the predominant industry, and the production of yarn merely a by-occupation. In these parts the justices could not be expected to be conversant with all the details of complicated textile legislation. Many cases which were brought forward by the inspectors were dismissed by magistrates who did not know the nature of the Worsted Acts, and the committee was constantly printing digests of the law, handbills, &c., or sending deputations³ to explain to these benighted justices the wonders of the statutes. But knowledge, when it came, did not convince the local authorities of the error of their ways. Doubtless they objected to being taught their duty by an upstart industrial organization, and did not intend to obey the behests of John Hustler and his minions. Hence the minutes of the committee are sprinkled with instances of conflicts between the committee and the justices of the peace who presided over the more outlying districts. In the heart of the worsted area justice was served out in full measure, but in the agricultural regions the magistrates were always ready to snap their fingers at the fussy cloth-makers. Thus in December 1777 the Recorder of Pontefract, along with other justices, complained that the inspectors were being too severe in their prosecution of the spinners, and asked for greater leniency towards offenders.⁴ In

¹ Minutes, April 6, 1784.

² Ibid.

³ e.g. the chairman, the clerk, and another member were sent in June 1779 to explain the Act to two justices of the peace in Bedale.

⁴ Minutes, January 5, 1778.

the following year some Lancashire magistrates refused to hear the evidence of an inspector, and discharged the defendant, much to the disgust of the committee who at once entered upon a dignified correspondence with the offending justices. The committee stated that 'they was hurt at the Conduct of the Justices, . . . that they would give up the matter for this time, and hoped for the future that the justices' would administer the Act properly.¹ The Mayor of Doncaster was the most stubborn opponent of the committee, and the two were perpetually at war. In September 1784² the committee threatened King's Bench proceedings against him, for refusing to hear certain cases of false reeling. In the same year he allowed women to escape from the district without having paid their fines, at which the committee wrote that they 'think themselves very ungently Treated, and demand a Specific Answer from himself for such extraordinary behaviour'.

What happened to the mayor we do not know, for the matter is not mentioned again; but the whole attitude of these country magistrates is seen at its best in the action of the justices of Richmond in 1801. On this occasion, the inspector had brought certain women, charged with unduly neglecting their work, before the magistrates. Still, 'although the offence was completely proved before the Magistrates, they refused to convict [the women], alledging that the Act of Parliament was arbitrary and not fit to be put into execution'. The inspector asked for reasons, but the magistrates declined to give any; thereupon the committee, donning its best style of injured dignity, declared that 'the justices . . . must do their duty in administering the law. . . . It is no excuse for a Magistrate to say that the Law is arbitrary and therefore not fit to be executed, . . . and the magistrates' decision has caused considerable surprise and regret.' If, therefore, the justices still refuse to give adequate reason for their contempt of the law, 'the Committee feel themselves under the disagreeable necessity . . . to direct an information to be filed against the magistrates, or to take such steps as counsel shall advise'.³ And there, so far as the minute books

¹ *Ibid.*, January 4, 1779, and March 29, 1779.

² *Ibid.*, September 27, 1784; January 3, 1785.

³ *Ibid.*, June 22, 1801.

are concerned, the matter seems to have ended. Still, in spite of these obstacles, the Worsted Committee undoubtedly succeeded in a great measure in achieving the aims which it sought to attain. The constant circulation of handbills and the advertisements in the local papers made people aware of the main features of the Act, and the inspectors often succeeded in finding many cases of deceit. If one turns to almost any copy of the Leeds newspapers from 1777 to the end of the century, one encounters instances of prosecutions. For instance, the following,¹ in a little over a month :

January 10, 1782 : Four women of Wakefield and one of West Ardsley were fined 5s. each for reeling false or short yarn

January 28, 1782 : Mary Leach, of Cullingworth, was fined £20 for receiving a quantity of purloined or embezzled worsted yarn.

February 10, 1782 : Twenty-five women indicted for reeling false and short yarn. One was fined 40s., this being a second offence, and a man for a third offence was ordered to be 'committed to the House of Correction for one month, and to be publicly whipt at Colne upon a Market Day.

It is surprising to find so many women figuring in the lists, but this is due to the fact that spinning and reeling were done chiefly by women, who also acted as distributing agents, receiving the wool from the clothier, and handing it out to be spun by neighbours. Such agents were compelled to examine all yarn returned to them, and to take note of any which was falsely worked. If they failed in this, they themselves were liable to a fine, and thus we find a certain woman at Heptonstall fined 10s. for refusing to discover who reeled two pounds of short yarn.² All these cases were brought before the justices by the worsted inspectors, and the courts were regularly employed attending to such offences.

Another aspect of the Worsted Acts was also given attention—namely, the punishment for neglect of work. Eight days were allowed for the fulfilment of any task entrusted to an employee. If at the end of that time the material was not returned, the employer informed the inspector, who at once called on the offender, or sent him an official note, and instituted proceedings unless the goods were at once returned to their owner. The

¹ *Leeds Intelligencer*, under these dates.

² *Ibid.*, January 8, 1782.

punishment for this offence was incarceration, and many culprits, chiefly women, were committed to the House of Correction for a month, under conviction of having neglected the performance of their duties for eight days. This preponderance of female culprits makes one wonder if the men were especially law-abiding, or if the 'solidarity of labour' which had frightened the masters at an earlier date was also instrumental in causing the inspectors to wink at male offenders, whilst taking advantage of the disorganization of the women to pounce upon female transgressors. There is no conclusive answer to this query, but, from a perusal of the offences recorded in the newspapers, one certainly gets the impression that the law was invoked against women and very seldom against men.

The Worsted Committee was established to discharge the above definite functions and administer the Worsted Acts; but the committee consisted of a number of influential and energetic cloth magnates, and therefore it was only natural that it should concern itself with the whole of the wide field of economic life. Anything which affected the worsted industry was a fit and proper subject for the committee's attention. Hence we find in its minute books brief references to the many economic movements which were on foot at this time, and few matters of importance escaped the committee's notice. In the first place, it is gratifying to find that whilst the committee was primarily an association of employers, bent on administering laws favourable to masters, it did not neglect the interests of the workmen. Various laws during the century forbade the payment of wages in truck, and the committee frequently issued notices drawing the attention of masters to this provision. Occasionally an inspector brought a master before the courts for paying a workman in goods instead of in money,¹ and when, in times of depression, work and wages were scarce, the committee did its best to ensure that truck payments should, if possible, be prevented.² In its treatment of its inspectors, the committee strikes at least one happy note when, in 1796, 'on account of the present temporarily high price of provisions and

¹ e.g. September 27, 1784, when Wm. Smith of Leeds, dyer, was convicted of having paid in truck.

² April 12, 1802, 1,000 handbills issued concerning truck.

other necessities of life', it was resolved 'that the Salaries of the Inspectors be advanced £5 per annum in addition of their present salaries of £50', this to continue so long as the committee thought proper and necessary.¹ But, whilst safeguarding the workmen from truck, the committee also attempted to suppress combinations of labour such as might induce the employees to seek higher wages for themselves. The committee itself might be regarded in its general nature as a masters' union, instituted for the protection and advancement of the employers' welfare. But at the same time any workmen's union was forbidden by law, and although some kind of organization certainly did exist, the Worsted Committee did its best to stamp out all such unions of labour. In 1791 it prosecuted certain Halifax wool-combers² for having conspired to raise their wages, and in the following year it expressed the opinion that friendly societies, if allowed to grow up, would 'have a prejudicial tendency by enabling the members thereof to form illegal Combinations'.³ Thus, though the committee sought the welfare of man as well as master, the journeyman must not attempt to better himself by corporate action. He must refrain from union with his fellows, and be content with the individual bargaining and free contract between himself and his master.

Secondly, the committee paid special attention to all matters concerning the wool supply. When the Lincolnshire wool-growers sought permission to export their surplus wool, the Worsted Committee was loud in its objections, and spent eighty guineas in opposing the application.⁴ In 1787 similar support was given to the Act strengthening the prohibition on the exportation of wool, and one hundred guineas were taken from the funds to meet the cost of procuring that statute. Then, when the Act was actually passed, the committee flooded Yorkshire with notices quoting its clauses, and joined with the Leeds Cloth Halls trustees in prosecuting Mr. Hainsworth, the Leeds merchant, who attempted to smuggle wool abroad. In fact, during this and later agitations, the committee spent vast sums of money on the anti-smuggling crusade.⁵ At the same time, the exportation of machinery and cloth-making imple-

¹ June 20, 1796. ² Minutes, January 3, 1791. ³ *Ibid.*, April 2, 1792.

⁴ See Minutes, 1781-2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, all 1789.

ments was closely watched, and the activities of the committee were largely responsible for obtaining the Act of 1780-1 which prevented the exportation of utensils used in the woollen manufacture.¹ When this Act was passed offenders were brought to justice by the committee for attempting to export the actual implements or plans of the same.² Wherever any project was being discussed the voice of the Worsted Committee was heard, and in all parliamentary and legal matters which touched the welfare of the Yorkshire cloth trade the employers' committee would fearlessly put forward its own point of view.

Thirdly, the committee attempted to foster the mechanical arts, and to encourage all inventions which might conduce to the welfare of the industry. When a local inventor had materialized some new idea, he would show it to the Worsted Committee, and if it was regarded as being a valuable discovery the inventor would be rewarded—under conditions. Thus, in 1779, a certain Mr. Mordaunt reported to the committee that he had discovered a more expeditious way of spinning wool; but the invention does not seem to have gained the approval of the committee, for we hear nothing further about it. In 1785, however, an important innovation was brought before the committee. This consisted of an improved method of washing wool, which would perform that task more quickly and thoroughly than the older methods were able to do. The inventor, James Hartley, who lived near Gisburn, offered to give a demonstration to the committee, and disclose the details fully to them if they cared to pay for the knowledge. A deputation of six was ordered to wait upon Hartley, examine his process, and make a report to a special meeting of the members. The verdict expressed was entirely favourable; the deputation thought Hartley's discovery a great improvement on existing methods, and declared that it would be of public utility. The committee therefore decided to give Hartley £100, on condition that he revealed every detail of his improved process to them; and in June 1785 the last instalment was paid, Hartley having satisfactorily surrendered his

¹ Minutes, September 24, 1781.

² Ibid., also September 23, 1793. In February 1787 the committee resolved that 'the permitting any tools or implements used in the woollen manufacture to be exported will be very detrimental and highly injurious to the Trade of the Kingdom'.

discovery to the committee.¹ Thus, in the advancement of technological knowledge, the Worsted Committee kept an open eye and an open purse for those who made some contribution towards industrial skill.

Lastly, the committee figured in some small degree as a philanthropic agency, supporting the cause of charity and education. As we noted above, the inspectors received the informer's share of all fines levied upon their victims, but the Worsted Committee insisted that these moneys should be immediately handed over to itself. This order was made in April 1784, and at once informer's money began to flow into the special fund set aside for it. Here it remained until a substantial sum had accumulated, when it was distributed to local philanthropic or educational institutions. The chief places to receive support were the General Infirmaries of Leeds and Manchester, which in 1787, for instance, received contributions of twenty guineas and ten guineas respectively.² In fact, by 1796 the committee had paid such sums into the coffers of these hospitals that it claimed the right to recommend patients for admission, and the members of the committee were informed that if they were desirous of recommending any 'distressed objects', they were to write to the Clerk of the Committee, and obtain the necessary formal approval from him.³ At the same time, occasional grants were made in support of local Sunday schools. In 1791 the sum of £4 11s. 3d. was handed over to the Sunday schools of Northowram, near Halifax,⁴ and in the following year the sum of £10, received by an inspector as informer's money, was given to a very deserving school in another part of the Riding.⁵

Such were the varied activities of the Worsted Committee. They touched almost every side of economic and political life, and no issue relevant to the industrial welfare of the county was allowed to pass unattended. Existing legislation was enforced on masters and men alike, suggested laws were supported or opposed, and new ideas in textile procedure were welcomed. In its character the committee contained something of a seventeenth-century corporation, something of a chamber of commerce, something of an employers' federation or union:

¹ Minutes, January to June 1785.

² Minutes, December 31, 1787.

³ Ibid., March 21, 1796, and June 1797.

⁴ Ibid., September 20, 1791.

⁵ Ibid., June 20, 1792.

in the methods of its officers it bore some resemblance to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. It was a strange institution, and perhaps the strangest thing about it is the fact that it still exists. The Worsted Committee is now a comparatively flourishing body, which administers those clauses of the eighteenth-century Worsted Acts which are still operative. Between the prosperous condition of the eighteenth century and that of to-day there is a long story of many narrow escapes from extinction, into which we cannot enter at any length; but let us briefly note the outstanding events in the committee's history during the last century.

The *raison d'être* of the Worsted Committee lay in the domestic system of industry, by which goods were worked up free from constant or detailed supervision. So long as the preparation of yarn was carried on in the cottages, so long would it be necessary for the inspectors to go round, attempting to check frauds and thefts amongst the workpeople. But, when spinning machinery began to be congregated in factories, and spinning became a factory process, the merchant could more effectually watch his spinners, and guard against wrongdoing. When this took place, the worsted inspector was deprived of the chief of his functions, for it had been in the spinning and reeling of yarn that his police duties were most necessary. When wool was not sent out to agents to be distributed by them, it was no longer possible to defraud the owner by substituting inferior wool, and when all the spinning and reeling was performed on standard machines under the eye of an overlooker it was difficult for the operative to transgress as in former days. This change took place in the last years of the eighteenth and the early years of the nineteenth centuries, and with it came a contemporaneous decline in the demands on the energies of the inspectors. In September 1801 the committee decided that 'from the very great decrease of spinning at home' five inspectors would be sufficient to carry out the duties of the committee, and therefore discharged two of its staff.¹ In 1804 the number was reduced to four,² and in 1807 the committee ordered 'that in consequence of the resignation of John Sutcliffe, Inspector, and of the great decrease of hand-spinning, that there is no occasion for a succession, but

¹ Minutes, September 28, 1801.

² *Ibid.*, March 26, 1804.

that a new division of the districts be made out', and the number of inspectors thus came down to three.¹

With this reduced staff the committee continued its activities for the next half century. It still drew its income from the drawback on soap, and, with the expansion of the West Riding industry, the amount of this drawback increased rapidly. The committee was quite wealthy, and at times was at a loss how to dispose of its funds. In 1820² the mileage grant for committee-men was raised from 6*d.* to 2*s.* per mile, and in 1821³ it was ordered that 'each member of the Committee be paid the sum of two guineas for his attendance at each meeting, exclusive of travelling expenses'. At the same time, whilst any slackness on the part of inspectors was severely penalized, faithful servants were treated most generously, with pensions on their retirement, and grants to their widows on their deaths. Thus in 1849 an aged inspector was given twenty guineas on his retirement,⁴ and in the previous year, on the death of another inspector, 'after a painful and expensive illness', the committee resolved that 'a gratuity of thirty guineas be paid to his widow, as a mark of approbation'.⁵

This wealth, however, was not to continue much longer. Throughout the early part of the nineteenth century chancellors of the exchequer had tried to abolish the drawback on soap. On such occasions the Worsted Committee made strong protests, which usually resulted in the continuance of the exemption, and therefore of the committee's income. With the reform of the financial system during the 'forties and 'fifties it was inevitable that the soap duty should be removed, and the step was eventually taken by Mr. Gladstone in 1853.⁶ This cut off the committee's source of revenue at one blow, and left the members in a state of perplexity. The committee at once began to take stock of its position, dismissed three inspectors, and appointed a sub-committee to inquire into the financial situation and give advice as to the future. The sub-committee urged that the efficiency of the committee should be maintained as long as the funds lasted. Economies were to be effected by stopping all mileage and attendance allowance, by retaining only one in-

¹ Minutes, September 28, 1807.

² *Ibid.*, September 24, 1821.

³ *Ibid.*, September 25, 1848.

⁴ *Ibid.*, June 18, 1820.

⁵ *Ibid.*, September 24, 1849.

⁶ *Ibid.*, June 20, 1853.

spector, by reducing the clerk's salary from £40 to £20, and by drastically curtailing the printing bill.¹ This report was accepted, and the committee lived on. But it was a precarious existence; in place of the 18 or 20 members who had attended the meetings prior to 1853, the attendance now fell to ten, six, four, two, and at times the secretary was the only person to make an appearance.² The funds of the committee were invested in canal shares, scarcely a profitable source of income. All efforts on the part of the surviving members failed to enlist the interest and financial support of the worsted masters, and for nearly twenty years the outlook for the organization was very gloomy, so much so that at times it seemed almost desirable to commit suicide. After 1870 the energetic appeals of the committee brought about a revival of interest. Manufacturers began to see that the growth of factory production had not entirely removed the possibilities of fraud and theft, and that there was still need for a police organization such as the Worsted Committee. Subscriptions began to trickle in, and from that time onward the committee received considerable support. In 1889 an attempt to repeal the Worsted Acts was defeated, thanks to the strong opposition of the committee. Hence the organization still lives. It receives subscriptions from about 360 firms, chiefly located around Bradford, Halifax, and Keighley, and meets quarterly to transact any business which may require attention. Its two inspectors discharge the same duties as did their predecessors over a century ago. They seek out cases of purloining, embezzling, stealing, pawning, or selling of yarn, and bring to punishment those who buy such stolen material as well as those who sell. They visit railway warehouses, and try to identify unclaimed worsted materials which may be lying there; and in every possible way they strive to protect the masters from theft and loss. The number of the offences which they discover is not very great, and, to an outsider, scarcely seems to justify the continuance of the institution. But evidently the heads of the worsted industry hold a different opinion, and so the committee, having emerged from the shadow of the 'sixties, will probably continue its existence until the perfect man is evolved, on which distant day lawyers, magistrates, and worsted inspectors may find their occupations gone.

¹ Minutes, September 20, 1853. ² *Ibid.* See list of attendances, 1853-70.

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Leeds Corporation MSS. These consist of the Minute Book of the Corporation from 1661 to the present day. The Corporation also has in its possession the various deeds of transfer concerning the Coloured Cloth Hall. All are housed in the Town Hall, Leeds.

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